

# THE KRAVITZ FAMILY HISTORY

Part I: 1863-1963

Part II: 1963-2002

Part III: Family Archives

by

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## **1. Introduction To Part I**

## **2. Our Family in Russia, 1863-1946**

The Rissins in Vereschaki... The Kravtsovs in Rokitno... World War II... Nazi SS kill my grandfather.

## **3. Mama And Papa in America, 1910-1917**

Mama and Papa emigrate... Their ships and the ships' manifests... Their marriage and citizenship.

## **4. The Krawitz Family Before I Was Born, 1918-1932**

The children are born: Bertha, Joseph, Martha and Bernard... Bertha's illness... Papa's butcher shops, investments and partners... I was born in 1932.

## **5. Our Childhood Home: Burnett Place, 1921-1943**

Papa's apartment house investment in an industrial zone in the Bronx.

## **6. My First Eight Years, 1932-1940**

Growing up in the Depression... Papa's businesses... Joe's conflicts... Managing the building. Yiddish without Jewish... My anti-Semitic playmates.

## **7. Eight to Eleven Years Old-Major Family Changes, 1940-1943**

Bertha and Martha marry... I go in and out of Yeshiva... Papa dies... Renah born... Bernie drafted into the Army... Joe on the farm... Mama abandons Burnett Place Building... Mama and I move to Manida Street.

## **8 The Departmental Years at PS 48, 1943-1945**

The Boy Scouts... Summer camps... Si's darkroom... Bernie in the Philippines... After school jobs... Hebrew school troubles... Bar mitzvah... Playground sports... Graduation. Stuyvesant High School.

## **9. Stuyvesant High School Years, 1946-1950**

Broken leg... The end of my Scouting... Bernie at home... Howard born... Baseball and basketball teams... Part time jobs... Camp Boiberick... College plans. . Picking Cornell.

## **10. Cornell University, 1950-1951**

Financial shoestring... Freshman engineering... Freshman basketball and baseball... Leaving Cornell... Finding Kansas University... Going to Kansas.

## **11. Kansas University, 1951-1954**

Financial shoestring... Learning to study... Joining a fraternity... Buying a car... Summer job at RCA... Air Force ROTC commission... Admiral Rickover's offer... Graduate in 2.5 years... Name legally changed to Kravitz.



## **12. The Air Force Years, 1954-1958**

Studying at The Air Force Institute of Technology... Discovering Jews... Working at the Electronic Components Laboratory... The government expert... Teaching at the University of Dayton... Meeting Marjorie Helman... Our wedding... Leaving the Air Force... Harvard by accident.

## **13. The Harvard Years, 1958-1963**

Life on a shoestring in Arlington, Mass.... The Harvard mystique... Alan born... Summer work at Lincoln Lab... Mama dies... GE Fellowship... Bell Fellowship... Saul born... Struggling with research... Graduation... Job offers... Alan starts school... We move to Schenectady and General Electric.

# **PART II MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE 1963-2002**

## Introduction to Part II

## **14. The General Electric Years, 1963-1973**

## **15. The Air Force Office of Scientific Research, 1973-1981**

## **16. The Bendix Corporation, 1981-1983**

## **17. The Allied Corporation-Aerospace Sector, 1983-1986**

## **18. AlliedSignal Corporate Technology, 1986-1996**

# **PART III FAMILY ARCHIVES**

## A. Family Memorial Archives

## B. Family Tree Descendency Charts

## C. Hebrew Name Origins



In memory of

MAMA

Who believed I could do anything, if I

“would put my head to it.”



*Emma Krawitz*

*1890-1959*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

I thought that it would be a simple task to write about my life, as Marge had done, and that my sons would follow later, so that the grandchildren would have a history of their family. Very quickly I realized, however, that I needed to include the lives of my parents, and then my grandparents, as well as my siblings for any family story to make sense.

The objective of my effort therefore shifted from the writing of my own personal memories to researching and writing a Kravitz Family History. The family history then grew naturally into three parts. The first part is the story of my grandparents' family in Russia. The second is about my parents' immigration to America, and their marriage and family here, including my siblings and me. The third part is finally my own memories of growing up.

The Russian part of our family history tells about the lives of my grandparents and the development of their families, including my parents. It describes the hardships suffered by those members of the family who did not immigrate to America before 1924 and had to suffer Stalin's Bolshevik state as well as the horror of the German invasion of Russia in World War II, including our loss to the German killing force, the Einsatzgruppen.

The American part of our family history starts when my parents emigrated, settled, and married. My description of my family during the years before my birth relies on the stories my mother told me, and also on the memories of my sisters Martha and Bertha and my brother Joe. I began this effort after my brother Bernie passed away, so his recollections are not included. Martha and Joe are now gone as well. I trust that I am reporting their comments to me as they would have liked them to appear.

The third part of this family history begins with my earliest memories after I was born in 1932. My life was tightly coupled to the family during the early years, but grew increasingly independent as I passed through high school, college, Air Force, marriage, and graduate school. Thus this history mentions my sisters, Bertha and Martha, and my brothers, Joe and Bernie, mostly during the time I was in grade school. Afterwards they moved off stage into the periphery of my story. I plan to write some separate accounts about the later years of Bernie and Joe. I owe them this much, inasmuch as I was the executor of both their estates.

The story that I have written ends in December 1963. I had finished my Ph.D. studies at Harvard, we had moved to Schenectady, New York, and I began work at the General Electric Research Laboratory. Alan was then five years old. Saul was two years old. Steven was born two years later. I hope that they each will write their own stories some day. Schenectady is where they can begin, each according to his own memory.

I hope that this Kravitz Family History portrays the people in our family so that our grandchildren will think of us all as real people, and not just as names in the boxes on their family tree.



## 2. OUR FAMILY IN RUSSIA, 1865-1946<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1 HOW I LEARNED ABOUT OUR RUSSIAN FAMILY

My parents told us very little about their own families in Russia, the Rissins and the Kravtsovs. The little I knew came from Mama in the years that the two of us lived together on Manida Street after Papa died and while Bernie was in the army. Other than relating a few memories of her home village of Vereschaki, Mama never seemed interested in talking very much about Russia, and her silence matched my youthful lack of interest. She never volunteered, for example, that she had sisters in Russia and had been corresponding with them.

I became interested in my Russian roots only when I started to write this history in 1992. I had heard that some of our relatives had already immigrated to the US, but I was unclear about my relationships with them until I added them to my family tree. These people, particularly Fira Rissin, increased my understanding of the family history in Russia, particularly the years during and after World War II. The period before World War II was, however, still largely a blank.

Mama, however, had left a legacy that filled that blank in my knowledge about her family. Her legacy consisted of a trove of Yiddish letters from her family in Russia. These letters tell what Mama could have told me, but didn't, about her family, the Rissins, during the 1930s and World War II.

Mama, almost compulsively it seems, saved letters that her parents and siblings had sent to America between 1926 and 1946. Some of these letters were written to her brothers, who we knew as Uncle Morris and Uncle Izzy. No matter. Those letters she got hold of she never returned.

When Mama died in 1959, my brother Joe gave some of these letters to my sister Martha in the hope that the letters held names of people who would be interested in being told of Mama's passing. But Martha didn't start translating these letters immediately, and then she translated a few...without telling anyone. The remainder of the letters stayed with my brother Bernie until his failing health forced him to vacate his Central Avenue (Far Rockaway) apartment in 1988. When my son Steven and I cleaned out Bernie's apartment we unknowingly combined his portion of the Yiddish letter collection with the rest of his papers and sent the whole lot to my sister Bertha for safekeeping. When Martha died in 1998, her daughter Renah became the unknowing caretaker of those letters that she had.

The over 90 Yiddish letters and translations that comprise the present collection owe their existence to Mama, their preservation to Bernie and Martha, and their rediscovery to the efforts of Bertha and Renah.

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<sup>1</sup> ver3/26/02

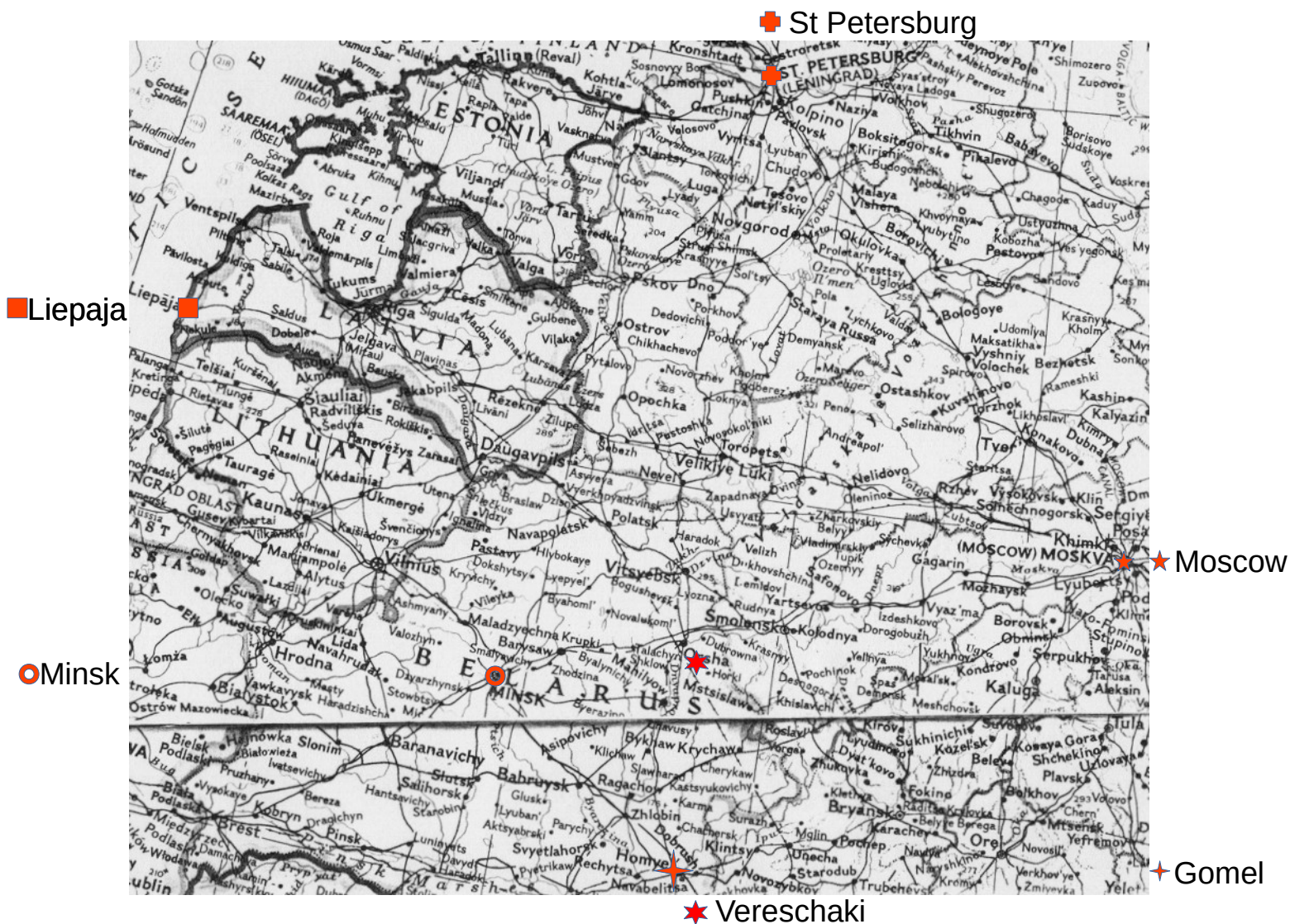


My friend, Ruby Becker, has skillfully translated many of these handwritten Yiddish letters, many on torn fragments of note paper, into English. Through her, and through Martha, these translated letters give us a unique glimpse of Mama's family in Russia, The Rissins. My cousin Fira Rissin, who was an actual eyewitness to some of the events I describe, has provided additional valuable information and insights.

## 2.2 The RISSINS- MAMA'S FAMILY IN RUSSIA

### 2.2.1 The Rissin Family in Belarus, Before 1910.

The inserts on the map below show the important places in the history of Mama's family in Belarus and Western Russia.





- Minsk is the capital city of Belarus and a cultural and education center. My great grandparents, the Abramowitz lived there.
- Vereschaki, a tiny agricultural settlement, is located in the circle that also encloses the city of Orsha and the town of Gorki. Mama and her seven siblings were born there.
- Liepaja, the encircled city on the west coast of Latvia, is the port from where Mama sailed to America in 1910.
- St Petersburg, at the top, is where Mama's brother Leiser moved to in 1934.
- Gomel, at the bottom, became the home of Mama's sisters after World War II.



★ Vereschaki: Jewish Settlement

▲ Gorki

From: Library of Congress Map Collection



**Vereschaki** is where Mama grew up. The 1859 map shows the location of Vereschaki (at top) the top) with respect to Gorki. The Russian title of Vereschaki on the map is “Vereschaki, Jewish Settlement”. Vereschacki was therefore not legally a town, or a village, or even a “shtetl”. It was only a “settlement”.

Vereschaki was founded sometime between 1834 and 1859 when Jewish settlers cleared the land of trees and established a subsistence farming community of between sixteen and thirty homes.

Each household had about seven acres to farm, a horse and wagon, cows, and chickens. The cows were mated to produce calves for slaughter.

In addition to farming, the Jews of Vereschaki made handcraft goods for sale to the neighboring villages. Women produced clothing and knitted goods while some of the men were blacksmiths who fabricated iron in Vereschaki’s forge.

Vereschaki had no synagogue, cemetery, or mikvah. Those functions were available in Gorki, six miles away. Vereschaki must therefore have been a secular Jewish community.

Yiddish was the language of Vereschaki. Although some of the people learned to speak Russian, and most people understood Russian, not everyone could speak Russian.

A “cheder” provided the children of Vereschaki with elementary education in Yiddish before 1900. After about 1900 the children could attend a state school, probably a mile away in the town of Potashi, where they studied in Russian.

Vereschaki is listed in The 1905 edition of the Russian Jewish Encyclopedia as follows:

“Vereschaki is an agricultural settlement in the District of Savsk, Region of Gorki, Province of Mogilev, of 1,200,000 square meters of occupied area and 168 rural residents.”

(This equates to about 210 acres. Divided among thirty families, each family had about seven acres.) Vereschaki is also listed in the Encyclopedia of Jewish Life, Shmuel Spector (Yad Vashem), NY University Press, NY 2001.

Vereschaki was not legally recognized as a village. Neither, in Jewish terms did it fit the model of a “shtetl”. Typical shtetls served as market centers for the neighboring villages, the Jews’ roles being traders and not producers. Shtetls also had Jewish religious institutional frameworks. Vereschaki was different. The Jews of Vereschaki were primarily producers of goods and services, not traders, and their community had no religious framework. This is the community my mother grew up in.

### **My Earliest Known Ancestors -The Abramowitz Family –After 1858.**

I have only a few pieces of information about the Abramowitz family. They lived in Minsk before 1858. They had two daughters: Zire born in 1858 and Beyle born in 1864. In about 1870 they moved to the Vereschaki agricultural settlement.



Zire was married off to Ber Lipack, probably a Minsk boy, in about 1873. She was 16 and he was 17. They lived in Minsk. Their first child was born a year later, in 1874. He was Eliezer (Louis) Lipack. Subsequently they had three more children, the youngest being Joseph, born in 1887. (For more about the Lipacks, see Section 2.4.4.)

Beyle married Nechemia Zvi Rissin, in about 1888. Both were about 24 years old. They lived in Vereschaki where Nechemia Zvi was the melamed who ran the cheder. Their first child was my mother, Emma, born in 1890. Subsequently they had seven more children. Mama grew up under the care of her Abramowitz grandmother who told her that her birthday was “drei voch en Elul”.

### **My Grandparents-The Rissins- in Vereschaki before 1910.**

Nechemia Zvi and Beyle Rissin probably inherited the Abramowitz land and house in Vereschaki. They grew vegetables, raised hay, grazed a horse and a cow and raised chickens for subsistence.

Beyle, and Mama when she grew old enough, seemed to assume the light tasks such as milking the cow, raising chickens, and even tending the vegetables. Mama told Marge in 1959 that she enjoyed squirting the frothy milk directly from their cow's teat into her mouth when she milked the cow. She also enjoyed riding the horse. Mama and her younger sister Mary also learned to sew clothing and knit woolens for their own use and for sale to the villages.

Nechemia Zvi and his sons assumed the heavy tasks of farming and also looked for work in the neighboring Russian villages. Vereschaki had a metalworking forge that Nechemia Zvi and several of the other men used in their work as blacksmiths for the neighboring villages. They frequently had to wait for harvest time for their payment. Their payment was often in produce rather than currency.

This division of labor enabled the younger Vereschaki women to develop skills that they could exploit after leaving Vereschaki. The men, however, remained relatively unskilled laborers who found the transition to life outside of Vereschaki quite difficult.

Nechemia Zvi and their eight children filled their house to capacity. In addition, during very cold weather, they brought the horse and the cow into the house to both protect the animals from the elements and let the children sleep nestled against the warm animals.

Mama remembered her young father as a gymnast who could vault over fences. He was also a learned man who ran the one room elementary school (cheder) in a shed next to their house.



Mama's formal education was limited to what she learned from her father in Vereschaki's cheder. The cheder had a dirt floor with benches along the walls. Holes were dug into the soil under the benches. The children were taught to throw their books into the holes, and quickly cover them with dirt, when they heard that the Cossacks were coming. Once the books were safely covered they had to pretend to play until the Cossacks left.

Mama spoke reverentially about her father many times. She mentioned her mother to me only once. That one time was after Alan was born. She asked if I would name Alan after her mother. That was the first time that I learned that her mother's name was Beyle. (Alan's Hebrew name is Benjamin, in her memory.)

One other family in Vereschaki was somehow (I don't know how) related to Beyle and Nechemia Zvi. This was the family of Shmuel Kegeles, who was probably a cousin of Nechemia Zvi. Shmuel and his wife had two children, Ber and Frume. Ber was a blacksmith who often went out on jobs with Nechemia Zvi. Frume immigrated to America where she took the name of Fanny Kelles and worked in the garment industry. Mama referred to her as her "cousin" Fanny.

### **Forces for Jewish Emigration from Belarus Before 1910**

Chaim Potok, in his biography of Vladimir Slepak, describes the conditions around Vereschaki in Belarus that stimulated emigration during the years just prior to the time that Mama left.

In 1905, 300 pogroms were reported during one week in Belarus. Thirty Jews were killed in Orsha in the 1905 pogrom. (Orsha is very close to Vereschaki.)

Many Jewish boys were running away from home instead of entering the yeshiva after Bar Mitzvah. Russian Technical Schools (eight year high school and junior college) were completely open to Jews. There they studied math, physics, accounting, German, French, etc. The University, however, had a quota for Jews. The poor economic conditions, the pogroms, and the rejection of the yeshiva environment, led many Jews to leave Russia.

Travel to America required \$60 (about \$2400 in 2000 money, ...using the New York City subway fare as an inflation guide). The steerage ticket cost \$30 (\$1200 today). Immigration required each immigrant to have \$30 (\$1200 today).

The exodus had started in the late 1800's after anti-Jewish riots in Odessa and the Ukraine. The exodus was greatly facilitated by the newly completed railroads that offered rapid and economical travel from the interior of the country to the exit ports such as Libau (Liepaja) in Latvia.

### **The Rissin Family in 1910**

Nechemia Zvi and Beyle had eight children by 1910. The names and birth years of the children are shown below. Those that went to America, and the year they went are indicated as well.



<u>Name</u>	<u>Born</u>	<u>Emigration</u>
Eshke (Mama)	1890	Went to America-1910
Mary	1892	" -1912
Itzak	1894	" -1913
Moshe	1896	" -1914
Leiser	1900	Stayed in Vereschaki
Pesha	1905	"
Sarah	1907	"
Blume	1910	"

The earliest photograph of Mama that we have is the 1906 picture, taken when she was 16. The 1910 picture of her brothers was probably one she brought to America with her in 1910. According to the printing on the backside of this picture, the photo studio was in Gorki. Thus Gorki, even in 1910, was probably the nearest commercial town.



**1906: Mama at the age of 16**



**1910: Leiser (10), Moishe (14), Izzy (18) (L to R)**



### 2.2.2 Emma, Mary, Izzy and Moishe Went to America, 1910-1914.

Mama (Emma) joined the exodus to America in the summer of 1910. Her story will be told in Section 3. The others are summarized here.

Mary came to America in 1912. She arrived from Libau on the SS Birma on April 7, 1912. She listed her name as Mera Risin, age 20, and gave Mama's address on Bridge Avenue in Red Bank, NJ for her destination. Her occupation was "knitter".



**1913: Mary (22), Izzy (20), Mama (23)**

(Potok reports that in 1913 every man had to register for the Army. War appeared imminent. Many men fled the country through Poland. Izzy, Morris and Papa left at that time, and probably for that reason.)

Izzy came to America in 1913. He arrived from Hamburg on the SS President Lincoln (I can't find his ship's manifest.)

The 1913 photograph documented Izzy's arrival for their parents.

Mama sent transit money to her brother Moishe in 1914. He arrived from Libau on the SS Kursk, on 8 June 1914. He listed his name as Moshka Rysin, age 18, and his destination was Mama's address at 233 E 4<sup>th</sup> St., New York. His occupation was "Laborer". He reported that his "sister" paid his passage. On arrival, Moshka was Americanized to Morris. They all exchanged Rissin for Rosen.



**1914: Morris Arrived in America**



**1914: The Siblings are Together**

The 1914 photographs document Morris' safe arrival for the family in Vereschaki.



By the mid-1920's Mama, Izzy and Mary had spouses and children.



**1926: Mama and Papa with (l to r) Bernie, Joe, Bertha, and Martha**



**1926-Izzy and Lena with their four children**

Mama and Mary had the skills to work in the garment industry sweatshops when the group picture was taken in 1914. Izzy, without skills, found only menial work in an unventilated gunpowder factory during the war. He later suffered from lung problems caused by the factory dust.

Mary married and had a daughter, Ethel, in about 1924. Mary died in about 1930. Ethel's father let Ethel be raised in a series of foster homes. Mama was powerless to intervene.

Izzy's wife Lena, we called her Tanta Lena, became mentally unstable and burdened him for many years. He described her condition in some letters that I will cite later.

Morris (at age 35) married Raye in 1931. She was an American, so we called her Aunt Raye. Their only son, Leonard, was born in 1932.

Mama felt responsible for her younger siblings. She found a skill for Izzy. She was frustrated by her inability to cope with the consequences of Mary's death. The wives of Izzy and Morris resented her attempts at interference. I'll come to all of that later.

While the photos of the children in America suggested prosperity before 1930, the economic conditions for the family in Russia worsened after Stalin took over the government in 1928. The next section will summarize the government imposed economic



conditions with which the Rissin family had to cope.

### **Mama's Letters To Russia 1910-1912**

Three letters that Mama wrote to the family in Russia between 1910 and 1912 have been preserved. The letters primarily instruct her sister Mary for her immigration in 1912. Mary's arrival was noted earlier on page 9.

The letters also show that Mama had a plan to bring the rest of her family to America as well. She therefore described for them the American work ethic that the family must be prepared to find in the here in the "Golden Land".

Her FIRST LETTER, written in 1910, soon after she arrived in America, is optimistic. Mama reported that America was not a laid-back place like their village in Russia. Mary should expect to work when she came to America. Here is a translation of her original Yiddish words:

Dear parents, sisters, and brothers:

I am well and hope to hear the same from you. Although I am lonely here in a strange place, it is better than at home in Vereschaki. Here the work is challenging for a person. One works hard and is always in a hurry. Time is calculated to a hair. One doesn't waste time on anything here like you do at home (in Russia). One doesn't even sleep an extra quarter of an hour. As soon as the clock strikes six, one has to be up. At seven o'clock, one has to be in the shop. And as soon as one enters the shop, one is accosted by hundreds of machines that clang and bang. But no matter how it is here (in America), here is better than at home (in Russia).

I don't know about the homes other families in Russia, but compared with our home, everything here is better.

One does not have to go and borrow a pound of sugar or a quart of kerosene. Such a smoky lamp does not burn here. In one word, the worker here lives like the richest boss back home, even a little richer and finer.

This we owe to serious hard work. Here one has to be a person with energy. Here one does not loaf as at home, that is, by us in Vereschaki. If one does not work, one does not eat. One does not interest oneself in what is not his own business. Let it go as it goes. Let someone else worry about who dies and works and toils. When one helps out another person, that is a donation that only takes your energy. However it is not the fault of Vereschaki but in general, of the entire Russian labor movement.

In a few months, if I become sick, I will get a doctor and a prescription for free. And they will also pay me several dollars. And if I should die, you will



receive 400 rubles, that is 200 dollars, and I will be buried in a piece of land in America, and no one will have to pay for anything.

You will think I am crazy for what I am writing here and you will not understand. So I will write some particulars. Here there is an association ( union) which is organized for the worker. Every worker, especially those who live alone, belongs to it. Everyone has to pay three dollars when he enters. This insures him for 200 dollars and a dollar goes to the association. This is the cost of the doctor's examination, because when one comes into the association a doctor has to see if the person is healthy. A sick person is not taken in.

I can tell you that I have joined the association and I have paid the necessary amount that I wrote about. Now I have to add in 50 cents a month and I am provided for, no matter what happens to me. You will be paid for me when I die. I put the insurance payment in Mother's name . Mother, when I die you will receive 400 rubles. The value is enough, don't you think?

Then Mama described the preparations that her sister Mary needed to make for her emigration.

My dear ones, since we have decided that Meira Rokh'l (Mary) will be the next to travel, she should really begin to get ready for that time. On Chanukah, I will send her several rubles to buy some personal things for the trip. Some gloves, towels, undershirts, socks, and blouses. You should not replace what you have, you don't need new ones. I will send you money to buy everything and for the tips that you need to pay. When all of this is done I will send you the money for the ship's ticket and for the government exit tax. You should pay the tax in Libova (the port city) like I did.

I sent fifteen rubles a couple of weeks ago. I think you must have already received it. Five rubles are for Meira Rok'l . The rest is for the house.

I send warm regard to everyone, my little sisters Blumke, Peshke, Sore Leyke, and my brother Leyzer Yashke.

From me, your daughter, Eshke Rissin.

Mama added a note addressed to her brother Izzy in response to a letter she had received from him.

Devoted Brother Izzy:

Thank you for your letter. I am sorry that I am not financially able to help everyone all by myself right now. When Meira Rokh'l will be here



it will be better. It won't be long before you will be able to come to America.

But in America, you should know that one has to work, and not in the same way as at home in Vereschaki.

Life is different but the work is also different. I hope that in a short time I will not be so lonely. But when Meira Rokh'l and you will be here, we will bring everyone over. We have to hope that we will once again be happy together. But this has to take yet a little time and must cost some toil and health.

From me, Eshke Rissin

The SECOND letter was written in April 1911, about six months after the first letter. This letter is quite pessimistic. Mama criticizes Mary for questioning whether Mama has actually sent money as she promised, and she asks Mary to report in detail on the skills Mary will need to earn money in America. Mama was not sure when she will have the money to pay for Mary's emigration since she had been working only intermittently. Additionally, her cousin Louis Lipack has borrowed money from Mama to build a house that she could have used to bring Mary, Izzy and Morris to America. Here are Mama's words:

Dear sister Meira Rokh'l:

Beloved sister, I am happy that you find yourself well and at home.

I don't have any news about myself that I haven't already mentioned in my letter to our parents. Even if I did have any specific news I don't think you would believe me. How can you tell me that I did not send twenty rubles after I said that I did send it? When I say that I have sent money, I have sent the money.

You ask me to write about everything, but your letters contain no news about yourself. How did you spend Pesach at home? What will you do after Pesach? Have you learned how to operate a sewing machine? And what work do you intend to do in Vereschaki or elsewhere?

Regarding your coming to America, I don't know what to tell you. My finances are not good. Since I have been in the Golden Land I earned very little at first because there was no work. Now I am earning more, but more goes away. I spend 4 1/2 dollars a week for lodging, and then I have expenses for shoes, a dress and some small luxuries. I have been able to save very little even though I have been "watching the dollar".



Louis Lipack has money, but he is engrossed in building a house for his father (our uncle), who is coming soon. He just spent 700 dollars for the land. The house will cost 6200 dollars. He has to raise 1000 dollars for the bank to loan him the rest. For that he has borrowed money from me that I could have used for you, Izzy and Morris.

He also borrowed from his brother Joseph, and his father sent him 150 dollars from home. His boss has added 200 dollars. His house will include half a house to rent and space for a store. He will still work for a few years to pay off the house and then start his own business in the store.

The THIRD letter is dated January 4, 1912 . Mama is again optimistic as she advises Mary how to prepare for her transatlantic voyage. Mary arrived on April 7, 1912. Only two pages of this letter have been preserved. Here are Mama's words:

Dear sister, you needn't take all your belongings. Take only the things that are necessary for the trip. As soon as you arrive, no matter what you have, you will get everything new. Wear your old shoes. It doesn't matter. I will get you some new ones right away.

Take 3 or 4 undershirts , 2 pair of underpants, and a pair of warm pants because it will be cold on the ship. Buy yourself a pair of galoshes and, if you need it, a dress and a couple of blouses. Whatever coat you have is good enough. That is all I will write about the clothes you need.

You should take a supply of food. Make cheese triangles and have mother bake several pounds of biscuits. You can buy a salami in Minsk. Get a loaf of bread in Libova and take it on the ship. Also, take some preserves and some sugar.

Further, dear sister, you write that you received the 15 rubles and are holding them for the trip. NO, dear sister. Ten of the rubles are for the house. They are to keep my little sisters from going around naked and barefoot, and for anyone else who is in need of something.

How did these letters, that Mama sent to Russia, come back to America and end up in Mama's letter collection? The best guess is that Mary brought them back to America when she came in 1912. Mary must then have given them to Mama. Mama kept everything. A copy of Mama's 1910 letter is on the next page. It is in her handwritten Yiddish.



## 1910 Letter Composite

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### **2.2.3 The Bolshevik Government of Russia, 1918-1941**

The lives of the family in Russia, as we learned from the translated letters they sent during the years between 1928 and 1941, will be discussed in the next section. I have inserted this short historical section to explain the changing political environment during that time so the letters from Russia can be better understood.

The Bolshevik Party emerged in 1918 as the dominant party in the new Soviet government. The Bolsheviks were committed to developing a Russian industrial state that was dominated by a citizenry consisting of industrial factory workers. This was the Socialist model they inherited from Marx, who used England and Germany as his models of industrial states.

Russia was not then such an industrial state. Russia had very few factories and factory workers. Most Russians worked as peasants in agriculture or as laborers in natural resource industries of lumber and mining. Russia imported practically all of its manufactured goods and paid for these imports with its natural resource and agriculture exports.

The Bolsheviks were determined to transform this agrarian Russia into the industrial manufacturing state contemplated by Marx. They thus had to turn an illiterate peasantry, capable of only primitive farming and natural resource production, into a literate people capable of manufacturing finished goods and acting as a self governing citizenry.

Lenin, in 1921, decided, however, that before he could create this industrial state his first priority was to feed the people. Thus he began to restore the agricultural production that declined during the revolution. He planned to defer the development of the Marxist manufacturing sector until foreign exchange became available from the export of excess food production. Under this New Economic Policy Lenin restored private property, independent farming, entrepreneurial small and medium sized business, and a market economy. Given such free market incentives, the farms took only a few seasons to restore food production to 1913 levels.

Following Lenin's death in 1924, Trotsky and Stalin dominated the leadership. With food supplies restored, they argued over ways to further increase food production, and about the amount of food that the government should expropriate to pay for the "proper" rate of industrialization. It had been generally agreed that small farms should be encouraged to voluntarily combine into larger collective farms (kolkhoz, 1927). The larger farms were expected to be more efficient and to provide a market for a domestic farm machine industry. Stalin, however, favored a more rapid acceleration of industrialization than could be supported from the voluntary collectivization of farms. He thus argued for forced collectivization the farms. Stalin won the argument in 1928.

The most productive farms became the first targets for expropriation and collectivization in 1929-1930. The owners (kulaks) of these successful farms, mostly former soldiers, were either shot or exiled if they resisted the taking of their lands. These owners were



then replaced by inexperienced bureaucrats and failed peasant employees, both of whom proved incompetent to run the collective farms.

Under such poor management, the quantity of food produced by the collectivized farms rapidly declined. But Stalin did not reduce the quantity of food he requisitioned for export. The result was a decreasing amount of food to feed the population.

Food distribution was also uneven. City workers received an allotment of food of the shrunken food supply from the government. But rural peasants were expected to live on the food they retained after the government requisition was met, even when there was no retained food. The net result of this maldistribution of available food was reduced allotments in the cities and famine on the farms. Millions of rural peasants and urban elderly died from starvation during 1932-1933. Our family suffered during this famine.

The **Torgsin** was a government scheme to exploit the famine. The Torgsin was a state operated department store that accepted for payment only hard currency, precious metals, or jewels that were convertible into hard currency. The Torgsin stores stocked foods and other goods that were otherwise unavailable during the famines of the early 1930s. Customers with foreign currency or convertible jewelry could enter these stores, but others could not. These stores thus succeeded in extracting any residual foreign currency from the starving population. The Torgsin proved a lifeline for families like mine, whose relatives abroad sent them American dollars. Millions of others starved to death once they had exchanged their last piece of jewelry.

My grandparents, in their letters, tell the story of their survival against this background of Stalin's efforts to create his Marxist industrial state. They tell of the food shortages, the expropriation of their land, their struggle to avoid starvation in the city, and their need for dollars to purchase food in the Torgsin. The letters that Mama preserved for us start their story in 1928, the year that Stalin started the forced industrialization of Russia.

#### **2.2.4 The Rissin family in Belarus, 1920-1941**

Nechemia Zvi and Beyle passed up their chance to immigrate to America when they could have come with their remaining children. Beyle made this clear in one of her letters. Morris had filled out all of the applications. They had the money. But, while they debated the pros and cons, the immigration door closed in 1924.

The 1920 photo shows the members of Mama's family who did not immigrate to America.





### **1920: The Family in Russia**

Seated: Leiser(20), Nechemia Zvi(52), Blume (10), Beyle (49).

Standing : Pesha(15), Sarah Leah (13)

(Blume died sometime before 1926. There is no information about her cause of death before the age of 15.)

What happened to Nechemia Zvi, his wife Beyle, and the four children who remained in Vereschaki? Here is what they said in their letters to America.

**Nechemia Zvi and Beyle**, by 1927, were already in declining health and suffering economic hardship. After receiving some money from Mama, Beyle wrote:

“ We have to see, with God’s help, about making clothes for the girls. If we live to see winter, they don’t have any clothes in which to go outside. But if we want to make some, they won’t make it for this amount of money. From father’s income, we can’t even sew up a shirt. The wool that you sent us will be used to make something for Pesha. I prefer that the children have what to go outside in.”

Stalin was also spreading rumors of war in 1927. Beyle wrote:

“ By us here, there may be wars soon. Here they have already listed everyone (future soldiers) from ten years of age and over and they also grabbed Leiser Yashe into the list. If, God forbid, there is a war, then we are all on the move...”



According to Pesha's 1928 letter, Beyle, at age 63, had foot problems that made walking difficult, shaking hands, and stomach problems. She complained a lot about her problems. According to Fira, Nechemia Zvi had stomach problems that he relieved by drinking buttermilk. He always carried a clay bottle filled with this buttermilk. The bottle was called a "deyskele". Thus Deyskele became Nechemia Zvi's nickname among his peers.

**Pesha**, the older of Mama's sisters, graduated from high school while living at home in Vereschaki. She left Vereschaki in 1926, at the age of 21, to attend the Belarussian Agriculture Academy in Gorki. Less than a year later, on April 15, 1927, she married Isaac Chaikin, a physicist.



**1926: Pesha (21)  
and Sarah Leah (19)**



**1927: Pesha and Isaac Chaikin with Nechemia  
Zvi, Beyle, and Leiser**

Isaac Chaikin taught science and mathematics in a Jewish school. of Gorki. (There is no mention of a wedding or any festivities in the letters.)

Pesha only occasionally returned to the village, such as to observe Rosh Hashanah in 1928, when her husband was "too busy" to go.

After receiving her degree in Agriculture, in 1930, Pesha worked as a consultant to the growing agricultural collective farms. Pesha was apparently caught up in the Communist spirit. She wrote in 1928:

"We must not be pessimistic and worry. And the young must bear the fire of hope that there will be a time when America and Russia will no longer be two separate worlds that are difficult to travel between. But they will be together as one, in one bond as Socialist Republics, and we will all travel home again."

Since Pesha was already in Gorki, the burden of helping the parents in Vereschaki fell on Sarah Leah who was still at home.



**Sarah Leah**, the younger sister, had the talent to go on to college, according to Pesha, but had to stay home to care for the parents. This commitment lasted only until about 1932 when Sarah Leah, at age 25, left her parents to care for themselves in Vereschaki so she could attend college in Gorki. She then came home only for six weeks in the summer, just enough time to help bring in the harvest and hay crop. The letters don't tell us what she studied.

**Leiser** (Eliezer Yoseph), the remaining son, was first mentioned in Beyle's 1927 letter that noted his draft eligibility. He worked with Nechemia Zvi in Vereschaki as a blacksmith, as did several other Jews including Shmuel Kegeles and his son Ber Leib. In 1931, as a result of Stalin's famines, shortages of iron and coal for the forge made their survival as independent blacksmiths impossible. The Vereschaki blacksmiths therefore joined a blacksmith cooperative in Gorki. Nechemia Zvi by then was considered too old. He was excluded from the cooperative.

Leiser actually wanted to leave Vereschaki and go to a larger city instead of joining the cooperative, but Nechemia Zvi discouraged him. Nechemia Zvi wrote to Mama:

"Leiser wanted to go away to the city. I did not let him. It's not good at all for someone in the city in many ways regarding an apartment and affording food. It is very expensive. .. And masses of people are unemployed. I barely restrained him. I told him: My son, stay at home until God will give us a better world. He listened to me, thank God. So I am happy. You may say that Father is afraid to let children go from the apron strings. On the contrary, we used to say that it is good wherever we are not. But today it is entirely different."

The blacksmith cooperative must have failed. A 1932 letter suggested that Leiser had left Vereschaki to find work in Orsha. A Torgsin store had opened in Orsha, with plenty of goods for dollars. Nechemia Zvi reports sending some dollars received from America to Leiser to purchase food at the Torgsin for the family in Vereschaki.

Subsequently, Leiser left Orsha and went to find work in Leningrad.

**Famine** came to Belarus in 1932. Beyle wrote to her sister Zire in Red Bank New Jersey in 1932, as the famine started:

"Thanks to the children who sent several dollars. If not for this, I don't know what would have been....Here in Russia it is very bad for everyone-for merchants, shopkeepers, cobblers and tailors....In one word, it is very bad. I cannot describe it. Whoever tore himself out of Russia is lucky. How good it would have been for us were we also in America. Although you write that it is not good there, here it is even worse. The world is talking about a war breaking out in the spring (God forbid!!)  
{Note: Stalin used war fears to maintain discipline during the famines that started in 1927. One war rumor was a pending attack from France!!}



Beyle also knew that the Bolsheviks were killing off the Kulaks, and this frightened her into writing to Moishe in America:

“We received the 20 dollars which you sent to us. Thanks, my son. They will be of use.

But, my son, you should not send more, for it is not a good thing. We have to get along the way it is. We must not become like Kulaks, that is, we must not become rich.”

As news of the famine in Russia spread to America, the children there feared that their parents were among those dying from hunger. In response Beyle wrote in the spring of 1933:

“You believe that we suffer from hunger. My daughter, we have told you that we don’t suffer from hunger.....As long as there is bread and a milk cow there is no hunger. And we get, now and then, a pound of meat. God should only give us years of health-then we ( God forbid) won’t die of hunger, especially if you children do not forget us.”

Then Beyle acknowledged that she had received the emergency food parcels that the frightened children in America had rushed to them:

“We received two parcels of food from America in one week (thanks to God). Moyshke sent one-we don’t know who sent the other. Moyshke’s parcel contained 5 lb. of flour, 5 lb. of rice, 5 lb. of granulated sugar, and one lb. of cocoa powder.

The other parcel contained 10 lb. of flour, 5 lb. of hard sugar, one lb. of potato flour, one kilo of confections, one lb. of cocoa, and a fourth lb. of tea.

And who sent it-is not known, other than Elijah the prophet could have thrown it down to us from heaven.”

Later in 1933 Beyle reported the “good” news to Morris that a Torgsin store had been opened in Gorki. It was the only place where food was available during the famine. They could buy food there, but only with foreign currency. Beyle reversed her earlier opinion about receiving American dollars. Dollars were also easier to send from America than parcels of food:

“You worry, my son, whether it is difficult for us to get what we need in the Torgsin. I can tell you that, last time, it was very easy because now there is also a Torgsin in Gorki, sent over from Orsha to Gorki. We got everything we needed in Gorki. With your dollars we get everything we need.

Thanks to you children-if not for your help, God only knows what will be. The help of our children here is nothing. If they would help us



with a few rubles, it would have no value. ..But if we get the necessities of life from your dollars-then we thank God.”

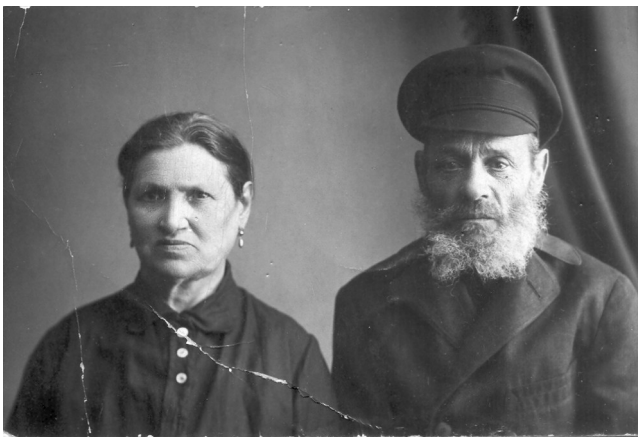
Beyle also wrote to a niece in America about the value that dollars had at the Torgsin during the famine:

“ So at the present time, thank God for the children in America. If they didn’t help out, who knows what would have been. The children here cannot help us at all. And if they did manage to tear away a few rubles and send it to us, what could we buy with them-nothing. When the American dollar arrives at the Torgsin we can get whatever we need: rye and wheat flour, sugar, tea and so on. ...when we have dollars, we get everything at the Torgsin. And for local money, even if we had it, we would get nothing.”

Beyle also appealed to a second niece in America on behalf of an elderly aunt suffering from the famine:

“If God will help you to send whatever amount of dollars, then send it to the Gorki Torgsin (in her name). ...She asked me to write for her because she cannot write...We manage because of what our children in America send to us.”

**Beyle and Nechemia Zvi** subsisted in Vereschaki during the famine by bartering what little they could produce and buying the rest at the Torgsin with dollars sent to them by the children in America. With increasing age and the absence of their children, they grew less able to produce anything. Beyle complained about having to milk the cow every day, winter and summer, with all her ailments. She pleaded for more support from America, listing the reasons why her Russian children couldn’t help more. Leiser, was struggling in Leningrad. He was overworked and, being unskilled, couldn’t earn enough to support them as well as himself. Pesha couldn’t help because she already was overworked consulting for the collective farms. Sarah Leah had her studies. Nevertheless, Beyle had her pride. She said that she was still somehow “middle class. We pay taxes.”



**1932: Beyle(67) and Nechemia Zvi(69)**



Mama had probably resented Beyle's leniency toward her Russian daughters and had recounted the earlier time when Beyle demanded that Mama milk the cow and do all of the household and farm chores while Beyle was still bearing babies. Mama's home chores denied her the chance to go to a real school. Now, she saw Beyle letting the other daughters abandon her to go to schools. Beyle even defended 24 year old Sarah Leah as "still a young child", when she was three years older than Mama when Mama went to America alone. Beyle responded to Mama's criticism:

"My daughter, regarding what you wrote about what depended on you and what you had to do--I know, my daughter, you don't have to tell me. I know you worked hard for everyone--whatever had to be accomplished, you accomplished on your own shoulders. Don't think, my daughter, that I have forgotten--I remember everything. But that was another world."



**Beyle** complained to Mama in 1933 that she was alone in Vereschaki and lonely for her American children. She wanted them to come and visit her.

Mama, meanwhile, had not given up her dream of bringing her parents to America. In response Beyle wrote:

**1933: Beyle (68) and Pesha (28)**

"My dear daughter, enough thinking about bringing us to America. You don't need us there. Better, think of how you can come here so we can see each other.."

I don't know whether Mama told them that the Depression in the US made such travel financially impossible.

**The collective farm movement** that Stalin started in the Ukraine in 1929 reached Belarus in 1932. Pesha was busy consulting with the established collectives. Beyle was preparing to have their property confiscated into a collective farm. In the fall of 1933 Beyle wrote:

"We have signed all of our property over to the collective. Ten villages will all work the land together and Vereschaki is also one of the ten villages. And the cows and the horses and the whole household will be communal. We will have to see what they give us--bread and milk and so on. But this will all begin in the spring after Pesach"



Beyle now warned the American children to stop sending money. The famine having been somewhat abated, she wanted to avoid the confiscation of their money by the collective.

The 1933 correspondence continued to discuss bringing them to America. A letter from Beyle reveals that they had turned down the chance to come when immigration to the US was open.

Beyle wrote to Mama:

“This week we received a letter from Moishe. He writes...that you propose that he should see to it that we are brought to America because you long for us very much....When we could have been united--we were thinking “yes” and “no”, and Moishkele (he should be well) filled out everything until they stopped letting people leave. At that time we were ten years younger and healthier and we would have come with the children. Then we could have done it ourselves--even money could have been obtained from the house and the land and the horse and the cow and so on.....but now everything is not ours with everything signed over to the collective.”

**Joe’s Bar Mitzvah** was the bright spot in the correspondence of 1933-1934, while they awaited collectivization of their property. We don’t know what Mama wrote to them but, according to Nechemia Zvi, Joe “sang Maftir with a beautiful nig’n.” Mama must have also sent Joe’s Bar Mitzvah speech in Yiddish because Nechemia Zvi related:

“I took the speech to the synagogue ...no one in Gorki could believe that in such times that so young a boy should speak so learnedly.”

Beyle wrote separately about Joe’s Bar Mitzvah:

“I cannot express to you, my daughter, the joy and satisfaction from your son’s Bar Mitzvah speech which you sent us. I began crying from joy when I read it on the paper. I did not hear how he had spoken it but perhaps I am not worthy that I should hear and see it.”

The “nachas” from Joe’s Bar Mitzvah speech must have lingered, because they wrote about it in four successive letters.

**The collective farm** was organized after Pesach in 1934. Their land, their blacksmith shop, and their horse were taken. They were allowed to keep their



cow, their house, and their personal belongings. The collective had a rough beginning. Beyle wrote:

“The collective became disorderly. We already had a peasant measure the land and, with a peasant, everyone plowed. This lasted five days. Then a dispute arose among everyone and the collective became all mixed up and everyone went to work his own. And there won’t be a collective this year. And what will be we don’t know.”

Beyle was overly pessimistic. The collective was organized in the early spring of 1934. The name of the farm was “The Way to Socialism”.

**Beyle’s** health continued to decline. She complained to Mama about dizziness, rheumatism, gout, and poor digestion. She couldn’t eat bread. Yet she milked the cow every day. In a 1934 letter she thanked Mama for sending some money:

“..thanks to you for sending some dollars. I have had teeth put in. In my old age, there wasn’t a tooth in my mouth.”

**Nechemia Zvi and Beyle** only hinted in their letters at how they managed economically after collectivization. While the collective provided them with certain foods, other foods had to be purchased for cash. And the cash came from their children. Sugar was rationed, so Beyle had to buy allotments from the “peasants”. She complained about waiting in line on her sore feet for herring, only to find that no herring could be bought. Their cow gave milk and an occasional calf for meat and barter. Even under these conditions, they managed to get along. They also managed to host many family guests, some of whom appear to have stayed for long periods during the summer.

**Leiser**, through 1933, had been trying, with his limited skills, to find work first in Orsha and then in Leningrad . His earnings were meager. He became sick in Leningrad in early 1934 and, at the age of 34, returned home to recover in Vereschaki. He arrived just after the land had been confiscated by the collective farm.

Since the collective farm had also confiscated Vereschaki’s blacksmith shop, Leiser had to find work elsewhere. He began working in the shop of a collective farm three miles away. His work contract called for him to be paid at the fall harvest, so he lived at home in Vereschaki during 1934.



On May 7, 1934, only a few months after he returned home, Leiser wrote to Mama to tell her about his marriage to Nina.



Leiser described Nina as a “wonderful woman, fine and clever, with whom it is possible to discuss different problems”.

Nechemia Zvi happily agreed that Nina was a fine daughter-in-law, with a fine voice for singing. But Beyle was less enthusiastic. Among other shortcomings, Nina only understood, but didn’t speak, Yiddish.

### 1935: Leiser and Nina

himself a Russian (Russak). He was happy to converse in Russian with Nina. But Beyle only understood, but couldn’t speak, speak Russian. She had to speak Yiddish to Nina who answered her in Russian.

Nechemia Zvi considered

Beyle saw the language problem as only the tip of the iceberg. Nina had grown up in a nearby Russian village, Astashkovichi, where her family had been the only Jews. Her family now lived in Leningrad. She had minimal background in Jewish customs. Beyle reported being “afraid” of Nina who always “surprised” her.

Although Nechemia Zvi enjoyed Nina in his house, Beyle didn’t. Neither did Nina want to stay in Beyle’s house. Thus, when Leiser’s contract with the collective farm ended, and he was paid, the couple made plans to move back to Leningrad. Beyle and Nechemia Zvi also concluded that they themselves could no longer stay alone Vereschaki without any of their children to help them.

**Move to Gorki.** Nina returned alone to Leningrad in October 1934. Leiser stayed behind to move his parents to an apartment in Gorki and to sell the property in Vereschaki. Beyle related the events to Eshke as follows:

“..we are in Gorki, I and father. We have left Vereschaki. We sold the house and the cow and Leiser Yashe used the money to buy a room in Leningrad. The “madam” (Nina) didn’t want to stay in the little shtetl. I was very afraid to talk them into staying with us together, since I had never lived with a daughter-in-law and wasn’t sure I could please her. I don’t have the strength to try to please..

I very much did not want to separate for life from my last son, he should be well-he is a good child. He took care of us. But I was afraid to hold on...she very much wanted to be in Leningrad. So we gave them



everything, the house with the cow, and let them be successful. Her whole family is there-father, mother, sister and aunts-so it is not wrong that she wants to be there.

She is there already 4 months. She went right after the Holidays (Oct. 1934) and its been three weeks since he went. He stayed until he found us an apartment and moved us over to Gorki.

So now we are in Gorki. Every evening the children (Pesha and Sarah Leah) come over to us and we talk about all of you...”

In a later letter Beyle reiterated to Mama that she had the financial means to find a way to keep Leiser closer to them, but, while she missed Leiser, she thought it best to have some distance between herself and Nina.

**The letters.** A theme that runs through the letters from Nechemia Zvi and Beyle is their constant plea for more letters and, with each letter, a dollar contribution to their support. Each letter from America must have been the occasion for a family gathering to digest and redigest each word. If someone in America didn't write to them, then their letters to the others in America would demand to be told the “truth” about what was happening. When Morris didn't write for a while they imagined he had gotten in trouble again “like he did once in Minsk” (whatever that was ). When Izzy didn't write they wanted to know the “truth” about him and his crazy wife Lena. When Mama didn't write they asked Morris to tell them the “truth” about her.

Each letter from Russia reported whom they had heard from and who they thanked for a contribution. A pattern emerges from these reports. Morris was the most frequent correspondent. He would visit Izzy and Mama to solicit contributions and then forward them with his letter. Mama had little money to give and probably didn't often write because she was embarrassed to write without some contribution. Izzy was the most generous contributor, but he always let Morris send the money, which Morris attributed to Izzy. Izzy rarely wrote to his parents.

Totally absent from the correspondence is the mention of any really joyous occasions. Festive weddings were not mentioned. Jewish holidays are mentioned only as calendar dates, not festive or religious ones. No gathering for a seder. As mentioned earlier, Pesha once reported going to Vereschaki for Rosh Hashanah, but without her husband who was “too busy.” The happiest times seemed to be reserved for the arrival of letters from America.

Through all of this grim life, Nechemia Zvi retained a gentle sense of humor. He delighted in writing letters in rhyme. His letters had a whimsical quality anyway, sometimes more philosophy than substance. In contrast, Beyle wrote with a crisp, critical, and down to earth style. You learned to like Nechemia Zvi, but you learned more from Beyle. An example of Nechemia Zvi's style is a letter in which he complained that



contributions from America were insufficient for them to even buy enough food. He spiced his complaint with a bit of humor:

“..were it not for the children here we would have languished. We would have had to lay our teeth on the shelf (for lack of food). For your mother, it wouldn’t have been so bad. She puts her teeth in a glass of water, so she would only have to put them on the shelf. But what would I do, since I don’t have any teeth at all? In short, thus said-thus laughed, but it is bitter to languish.”

**Sarah Leah** married Israel Gusin in 1935, shortly after Nechemia Zvi and Beyle moved to Gorki. Nechemia Zvi seemed pleasantly surprised that Sarah Leah had married a Jew. He wrote about her choice, the marriage process, and the social pressure for intermarriage in Gorki as follows:

“Now I will write about some news we are very happy about. Our Sarah Leah has written herself down with a young man. Here, it’s become the custom that when a young man and a woman want to get married they go to the registry office and they enter it in writing. And that is the wedding! And what means a young man from Jews? I imagine that you know that here all comrades are now brothers and sisters. That is the way it has become-all mixed up. A Jewish girl takes a Christian. That is why we were happy that our Sarah Leah got written up with a young man from the Jews. And it should be with mazel and happiness.”

Unknown to Nechemia Zvi, Sarah Leah never actually got “written up” with Israel Gusin, the man she would call her husband. Fira recalls Sarah Leah joking, many years later, that since she was never legally “written up,” all her children were bastards. ( This is not the case in Jewish Law, where bastards come from adultery- one party is married. So Sarah Leah’s children are kosher, even if she didn’t know it!)

**Nechemia Zvi and Beyle**, as tenants in Gorki, no longer had property to create barter capability. They were now totally dependent on cash, and their only source of cash was their children. At about this time, the government, probably through the Torgsin, reduced the dollar exchange rate to value of 5 rubles to a dollar. Nechemia Zvi and Beyle quickly found that their stream of cash from all of their children was insufficient to afford the lifestyle they had in Vereschaki.

**Fira** was born to Nina and Leiser in 1935. Nechemia Zvi’s wrote:

“Now I’ll let you know that Nina, Leiser’s wife, gave birth to a daughter and Leiser became, with mazel, a father. And we wish you a hearty Mazel Tov for Leiser’s newborn little girl.”

**Leiser’s** situation continued to sadden Beyle. She wrote to Mama:



“I have become withdrawn from him (Leiser)-that is a great pity. I could have arranged that we should be together but I was afraid of my daughter-in-law. She was for me a surprise, so I understood that it wouldn’t be the best situation for me. So I thought, may God give them what they want. And we sold the house (in Vereschaki) and gave the money to them. They bought a room in Leningrad. They both work to make a living. They have only one daughter (may she have a long life). But it is not good for two of them to work--the child needs a mother. Their income is not the best....I haven’t seen him in a year. I so very much want to see him...He got married but I tell you he is, “nebech” (Yiddish idiom: “the poor thing”), in poverty--a pity and we cannot help him. His income barely covers only bread--there is nothing left for anything else. But one has to get married--how long can one wait?”

Leiser’s income wasn’t even enough for bread. Fira recalls her mother saying that they could afford white bread only for Fira and not for themselves.

**Nechemia Zvi’s** Jewish life in Gorki was also more difficult than he anticipated. He wrote to Mama in February 1936:

“..we do not buy any meat for two reasons. Firstly it is expensive and secondly it is not kosher. Eshke, I can not possibly write all that is going on here (Gorki). There is no kosher, no Shabbos, no God-just wild beasts. For us elderly people, it is no good. We don’t want to eat trefe in our old age. I will tell you what we do. We have a small tin stove in our room so we cook up a pot of soup, sometimes with butter and sometimes with a little milk. And when it happens that we buy a turkey hen, we divide it for two Shabossim. But we haven’t eaten trefe-yet.”

In the Spring of 1936, with the poor exchange rate and the inflated cost of goods, Nechemia Zvi told Mama to tell everyone that it didn’t pay to send money any more. He preferred they send Pesach packages.

**Sarah Leah** gave birth to her first child, Boris, on April 29, 1936.

**Nechemia Zvi** reported the birth of Boris three days later. He also reported that they had moved to new quarters. This move was clearly driven by the need to reduce their expenses to a level that the contributions from their children could support.

Mama somehow learned of a man who was going to visit Gorki. She asked him to look up her parents. When he later reported to her that her parents were living in a “little booth,” Mama asked them why Pesha and Sarah Leah didn’t provide a decent place for them to live. The answer came from Beyle, in her own forthright way:



“You are sad that we are in a little booth? What can we do if, in Gorki, there is a scarcity of apartments. For a tiny room, one pays 40 rubles a month.

Our booth consists of, how you would say, boards painted with clay on both sides and a stove with pipes. In the summer it wasn't bad to be in it. We don't know how it's going to be in winter. We figure that with heating it will be warm.

Concerning what you write--why don't the children provide us with a better apartment? They are not able to provide for themselves. Sarah Leah also lives in a tiny house-we cannot be with her. Pesha lives in a not-too-bad apartment in a building on the third floor. There is not a place for us. We cannot walk the stairs.”

**Pesha** was still childless in June 1936, when Beyle sent this report to Morris:  
“You asked, my son, how our Peshinke is doing....It has been 10 years since the wedding and there is no child (it shouldn't happen to anyone). She had just become pregnant-it lasted three months and she miscarried. A short time later she became pregnant again. Her doctors told her to stay in bed. So she, poor thing, lay in bed the whole summer. She just about got through seven months of it-barely waiting for the eighth month, at which time Itze took her away to Leningrad to give birth. Thank God that she went- God knows what would have been here. In short, there is no child. She is still in Leningrad. She was due a week before Purim. ...Itze went there to cheer her up- that she should not become frustrated because she waited and yearned so much and now she is empty handed. Our whole enjoyment comes from Sarah Leah's little boy-may he grow up without sorrow-he is a very beautiful child.”

**Leiser** visited his family in Gorki during the summer of 1936, while his parents were living in the “booth.” He brought his daughter Fira with him. Beyle sent Mama this report:

“Leiser was at our home as a guest with his little girl. She is 1 year and 3 months old, a very beautiful little girl. She began walking before the age of one. She is very pretty. Whoever has seen her has become taken with her beauty. May she grow up healthy and may her luck improve the luck of her father and mother. He lives, poor thing, a very mean life. They both work and barely get by.”

Beyle and Nechemia Zvi lived in the “booth” from the Spring of 1936 until the Spring of 1937.



**Beyle** died on May 21, 1937, at the age of 72. As Nechemia Zvi wrote to his children in America:

“..on the 21st of May, at 11pm, my companion Beyle and your devoted mother fell asleep forever. I and her daughters and her sons in law accompanied her to her grave and we mourned her deeply.

Oh, Beyle, she flew away unexpectedly, from before her eyes-- she went to her true home. ...Her daughters (nebech) flew and ran to doctors but they didn't help their mother. I am now with my daughters, but my present life can give me no happiness...

Your mother's yahrzeit is on the 12th day of Sivan...”

Nechemia Zvi described her funeral:

“Because she was very kind to everyone, there was a fine funeral. She was appreciated in Gorki. Whoever came to her home was not sent away with nothing. To each one she gave something--to this one a few kopecks, to another some soup, to another a piece of bread--until her death. As she lay in the earth, the whole town came to her and they read for her from the Bible and everyone mourned her. Her parents lived longer than she did. She was 72 years old and, from her, praise God, there is a generation in the world.”

Then Nechemia Zvi addressed his sons Morris and Izzy:

“Children, I ask you. What should be about saying Kaddish for your mother? You will probably not be able to do it and Leiser as well. But Kaddish must be said. She always talked about that. She is worthy by you to say Kaddish, but for me it is a difficult thing. I am weak and one must go three times a day. It sometimes happens that I cannot go. ....write me what we should do. We could hire, for money, a “Kaddish sayer.” Perhaps we could have it done where you are. Here we can have Kaddish recited for money. It can cost 10 rubles a month....”

Looking to the future he wrote:

“Oh, Beyle...has gone off to the real home and I have been left alone. So what can be done. Maybe it must be this way. Now, Mother won't be asking you to write a letter and she also no longer needs your help to live. ...My dear children, now that your mother is no longer here, you might forget about me. So I ask all of you that you should write me little by little. Be well all of you and God should grant that we hear good things from you.”

Finally, Nechemia Zvi told his children that:



“Now is the end of my rhymes because we have been bereaved--  
I, my companion Beyle, and you, your beloved mother.”

Subsequently Izzy responded that Nechemia Zvi should hire a “Kaddish sayer” in Gorki and that he would send the money.



**Nechemia Zvi** gave up the “booth.” He moved in with Sarah Leah, her husband Israel, and their son Boris, who was then one year old. Sarah Leah was pregnant with her second child when Nechemia Zvi moved into her home. Then Nechemia Zvi became critically ill. In addition to everything else, Sarah Leah became his nurse.

By December 1937 Nechemia Zvi was able to report both his own recovery and the birth of Sarah Leah’s second son, Berthold, on November 23, 1937.

#### **1937: Nechemia Zvi (74)**

Pesha, who was still childless after 10 years of marriage, came to visit her father and play with the children. But Nechemia Zvi felt too weak to play with the children. During Pesha’s visits he tried to coax her into writing letters to America. But Pesha complained that her Yiddish fluency was waning. If only the American siblings remembered Russian, she could write much more easily. (Mama couldn’t read Russian.)

About Pesha and Sarah Leah he wrote:

“..Pesha says she loves Sarale’s children very much. You may believe her. No one should know of it--she is, nebech, a bitter heart....Now I will praise my daughters and your sisters to you. They are cultured and can converse with people. From them I don’t have anything to be ashamed of, before anyone. May they be well and happy and may Pesha have a child.”

Pesha did write, however, thinking that her father’s weakness would leave her as the main correspondent with America. In December 1937 Pesha wrote:

“..once we relied on our parents (to write) and now, he should be well, on our father. But for the future, I am taking on the obligation to write to you.....Sonya has two good sons-one better than the other (they should only be well). I like them very much.....Leiser also has a good child, a very pretty and lovable child. She knows us all and loves us as we love her. ...I am



healthy enough. I work and live well. My husband Isaac is very good to me and that supports me...I even derive "nachas" from Sonya's older son. We play together....."

**Nechemia Zvi** lived with Sarah Leah, but ate separately from the family. In March 1938 he wrote:

"I am with Sarah Leah, but we don't eat together because by them they eat pork. I have my own cup, a spoon, a plate, and so on. My food consists of a glass of tea, a little milk, butter, black bread, etc. I really need white bread."

In October 1938, a year after Beyle's death, the children prevailed on their father to order a tombstone for her grave. They promised to pay for it...Nechemia Zvi let the American children know that it will cost 180 rubles."

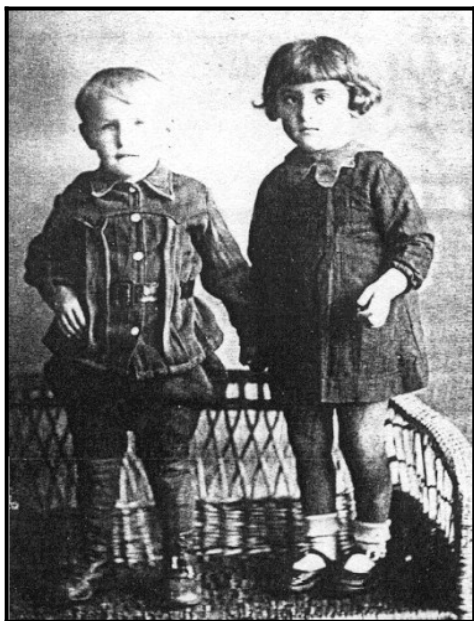
Mama still wrote to her father. But her news was not good. When, in 1938, she wrote that she had been sick, he responded with a blessing. When, in 1939, Mama was at an emotional low point due to the Depression and problems with her children, he wrote:

"Eshke, you say that you used to be higher than all your girlfriends and now you have become low, a shadow--that one cannot recognize you. No, my daughter, you should not fall so much in your eyes. You should be proud--you should not worry about the whole world. Eshke (you should live long) your mother worried about her children all her life and what did she accomplish with all her worry? I am saying this because one should not take life so much upon ones self. You must hope that God will make everything good for you."

**Leiser**, by 1938, was working at odd jobs in Leningrad. Nechemia Zvi described his work:

"Leiser's work is not fixed. He does whatever comes along. Now he is delivering boxes, casks, and other such things-it's not easy work. He commutes with the tramway through Leningrad and has to prove everything."





**1938: Boris Gusin and Fira ...the photo that Nechemia Zvi sent.**

**Fira**, now a three year old, came to stay with Sarah Leah's family in Gorki for the summer of 1938.

Nechemia Zvi wanted to send a picture, taken that summer, of Fira (Firetske) with Boris to America. Sarah Leah objected because she didn't think that Boris came out nicely in the picture. Nechemia Zvi was amused because he didn't think Boris looked good in person. He sent the picture anyway.

**Nechemia Zvi** was feeling his age of 73 years by 1938. He complained about loss of sight. He was also bothered by the tumult of the children:

"It is not easy to go on (writing) because my head is spinning. I must write to you when I come from shul. The grandchildren (Boris and Berthold) make my head spin. My dear children, when you were small, this didn't bother me,



**1940:Fira..in the blue dress that Nina made.**

but now it is rather a trial. Now it would be good for me to be in America with you. Since there are big children, Praise God, in your house, it would have been much easier for me."

**Fira** returned to Gorki again during the summers of 1939, 1940, and 1941. She remembers Nechemia Zvi from those summers in Sarah Leah's home as a bearded, reclusive man, who dressed in black and who retired to his books rather than spend time with the children (who made his head spin).

**Pesha's** long-awaited child arrived in April 1939. He was named Boris "after Isaac's father whose name was Ber." Pesha quit working to take care of her precious baby.

**Nechemia Zvi** pleaded for contributions to his support from his American children. The economy of Gorki changed rapidly. In August 1938 there was high



unemployment, but by July 1939 there was full employment but low buying power from the rubles his children there could provide him. He also discovered a source of white bread that summer. It was little rolls that reminded him of the challas Beyle used to make when the children were young. He pleaded for the cash to buy them.

**The Vereschaki Fire.** In a 1939 letter to Nechemia Zvi, Morris asked about conditions in the village of Vereschaki. Here is Nechemia Zvi's response:

"Yes, you asked about Vereschaki. You really picked the right time to ask. From Vereschaki there is news--but not good news. On June 5, 1939, Vereschaki became coal and ashes. almost the whole shtetl burned down. Six houses left standing. Since you may remember them--I will tell you whose houses remained: Sholem Eyze's, Mendel the lame one, Rashi Lifshe's, Mashe Ber Leib's, Shmuel Frume's father, and Abeh's. The fire burned at 12 o'clock noon but there was a very strong wind. The fire spread quickly over ten houses. The whole shtetl burned at once.

When Vereschaki was burning, everyone in Gorki knew about it because Vereschaki called to Gorki and Romanov for the fire brigade. Now there are fire trucks. The fire brigade did not wait long and flew off immediately. And many people from Gorki and Vereschaki ran and helped a lot. If not for the fire brigade and the people, the six houses would not have been saved. Enough was destroyed--a burnt Vereschaki."

Fira was in Vereschaki the day the settlement burned. Her mother's sister Fanya had married a man from Vereschaki. Only two days before the fire, on June 3, Fira had come to stay with Fanya and her family. Fira still recalls the fire:

"I remember a striking picture of a house all in fire and myself standing with my cousins in front of a burning house we were all taken out from. I remember the light and warmth around and a feeling of fear."

Vereschaki consisted of 16 homes at that time. Ten of them were lost to fire. The Jews of Vereschaki had to rebuild their homes in 1939.

**Ber Leib Kegeles**, Nechemia Zvi's "nephew", lived in one of the houses that was spared from fire with his wife Mashe and their three children. Ber Leib was a contemporary of Leiser and also a blacksmith. He and his father Shmuel were just two of the several blacksmiths who lived in Vereschaki.

**The Germans** had invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Nechemia Zvi indicated that he knew of this when he wrote to Mama that the "radio world gives them news from all regions."

**The Family in Gorki.** Nechemia Zvi and his daughters' families were living in Gorki in 1941. Sarah Leah's household included her husband, two sons (Boris and Berthold),



Nechemia Zvi and, during the summers, Fira. Pesha's home included her husband and her long awaited child(Boris). **Sarah Leah** bore a third son, Morris, in March of 1941.

Summarizing the situation before World War II:

- Blume, the youngest in the 1920 photo, died in a hospital in about 1926, at 15.
- Beyle, my grandmother, died in 1937 at the age of about 72.
- Leiser, at 34, married Nina Tseitlina in 1934. They lived in Leningrad with a daughter, Fira ('35).
- Pesha, at 22, married Isaac Chaikin in 1927. They lived in Gorki with a son Boris(' 39)
- Sarah Leah , at age 30, married Israel Gusin in 1937. They lived in Gorki with three sons Boris ('36), Berthold('39) and Morris.( ' 41), and Nechemia Zvi.

### 2.2.5 Surviving World War II in Russia, 1941-1945

GERMAN INVASION OF THE SOVIET UNION The German invasion of the Soviet Union, code-named Operation Barbarossa, began on June 22, 1941. It was the largest German military operation of World War II.

More than three million German soldiers, reinforced by half a million auxiliaries from Germany's allies (Finnish, Romanian, Hungarian, Italian, Slovakian, and Croatian troops, and a contingent from Spain), attacked the Soviet Union across a broad front, from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south.

The Soviet leadership had refused to heed warnings of the impending German attack, so Germany achieved tactical surprise and the Soviet army was initially overwhelmed.

By early September 1941, German forces were at the gates of Leningrad in the north, Smolensk in the center, and Dnepropetrovsk in the south.

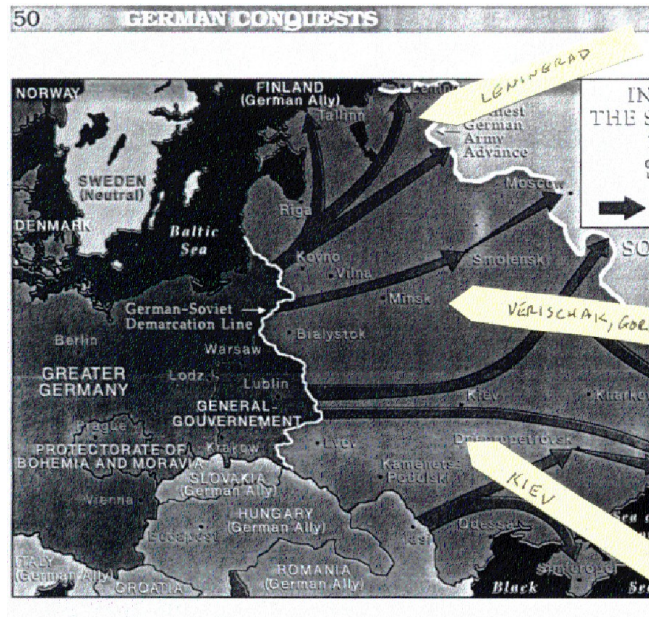
Germany invaded Russia on June 22, 1941. Fira was five years old when the Germans invaded Russia. She was spending the summer with her aunt Sarah Leah in Gorki.

Gorki and Vereschaki lay directly on the central thrust of the German Army aimed at Moscow. This route, through Smolensk, is shown on the map. The impacted cities of Vitebsk, Gomel, and Smolensk all had long histories of Jewish life. (I have therefore included some historical briefs of these cities in Section 2.4)

In Russia, our family was caught up in the mobilization for war in early July 1941.

In New York, our family was celebrating the wedding of Bertha and Si on July 4, just as German tanks were rolling past Vilna and Minsk. Bertha recalls that neither Papa or Mama were in a festive mood. Papa was worried about the war in Russia. Mama was unhappy about Bertha's marriage.





**1941-Major thrusts of the German advance ran over Gorki, Vereschaki, and Smolensk and toward Leningrad.**

- In Gorki, Pesha's husband Isaac Chaikin, a physicist, was assigned to non-military work that required him to go to the East alone. Sarah's husband Israel Gusin was drafted into the Army. Both men were about 40 years old.
- In Leningrad, Leiser (41) was drafted into the Army to defend the city. He left a note for Nina, since she could not leave work to see him off.
- In Vereschaki, Ber Leib (41) was drafted into the Army. He buried \$20US he had received from his sister Frume (Fanny Kelles) in the ground before leaving.
- In Gorki, the families were evacuated. Sarah with her three sons ( Boris-5, Berthold-3, Morris-3mos), Pesha with her son (Boris-4), and with their visiting niece (Fira-6), all fled by rail to the East ahead of the invading Germans.

**Fira** recalls the evacuation of Gorki:

“People were standing by the loudspeakers, listening to the radio, scared and crying. Then they buried my favorite pink dress, with brown polka dots along the edge of a collar, in the ground along with other things. Obviously, people expected to return.



All of us were placed in an open truck, and I remember Grandfather standing outside a house and watching us. I wondered why he didn't go with us. I had a bad feeling.

I remember German aircraft bombing our train. The train stopped and all of the passengers ran out to hide in the bushes and high grass in the fields. I lay down as flat as possible and pushed my body into the ground."

- **Nechemia Zvi** felt he was too old to run. He therefore sought refuge with friends in Vereschaki. The Jews in Vereschaki, including Ber Leib's wife and three children, did not evacuate, but stayed in the path of the oncoming German army.
- **Nina**, in Leningrad, was alone without either husband or daughter as the Germans intensified their effort to capture the city. By September 2, the German army had advanced to within 20 miles of Leningrad, but were repulsed there.
- **Leiser** died in the ensuing defense of Leningrad on September 20, 1941.

By mid-September the German Army had overrun Vereschaki and was laying siege to Moscow. The Einsatzgruppen killers started moving in behind the German Army. By early October 1941 the killers of Einsatzgruppen B must have arrived at Vereschaki.

**Nechemia Zvi, Ber Leib's family, and the 60 Jews of Vereschaki, were killed by the German Einsatzgruppen B on October 10, 1941.**

After the war, a Belarusian friend of Ber Leib who saw the Germans kill the Jews of Vereschaki gave his eyewitness account of the killing. He told Ber Leib that he had seen Nechemia Zvi singled out and clubbed to death. The other Jews had been forced into a pit where they were shot. The pit became their mass grave.

EINSATZGRUPPEN (mobile killing units) were German special duty squads, composed primarily of SS and police personnel, assigned to kill Jews as part of the Nazi program to murder the Jews of Europe. The Einsatzgruppen also killed Roma (Gypsies), Soviet political commissars, and others whom the Nazis deemed racially or politically unacceptable.

Einsatzgruppen operated behind the front lines in German-occupied territories in eastern Europe. During the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Einsatzgruppen followed the German army as it advanced deep into Soviet territory, and carried out mass-murder operations. At first the Einsatzgruppen shot primarily Jewish men. Soon, wherever the Einsatzgruppen went they shot all Jewish men, women, and children, without regard for age or gender.

- Einsatzgruppe A fanned out from East Prussia across Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia toward Leningrad. It massacred Jews in Kovno, Riga, and Vilna.
- **Einsatzgruppe B** started from Warsaw in occupied Poland, and fanned out across Belorussia toward Smolensk. It massacred Jews in Grodno, Minsk, Brest-Litovsk, Slonim, Gomel, and Mogilev, among other places.
- Einsatzgruppe C fanned out across the Ukraine toward Kharkov and Rostov-on-Don. It committed massacres in Lvov, Tarnopol, Zolochov, Kremenets, Kharkov, Kiev, and elsewhere.

By the Spring of 1943, the Einsatzgruppen had killed more than a million Jews and tens of thousands of Soviet political commissars, partisans, and Roma.



Ber Leib didn't know about the slaughter in Vereschaki when, after a few months in the Army, he became sick and was shipped to a hospital in the East.

Pesha and Sarah Leah also didn't know about the killings in Vereschaki. After five months enroute by train toward Siberia, Pesha and Sarah Leah had traveled about 1500 miles with their four children and their niece Fira. They arrived at Ulyanosk, a town on the Volga River, in December 1941. Three of the children were sick and in need of medical attention. Pesha and Sarah took the children to find medical help, leaving five-year-old Fira to guard their belongings on the railroad platform. Fira vividly remembers laying down across the baggage and staying there for a whole day.

Ber Leib, by some miracle, had by then been discharged from the army hospital and been ruled unfit for the army. He had heard that his cousins Sarah Leah and Pesha had gone to Ulyanosk and went to search for them. When he arrived by train he found five-year-old Fira guarding the luggage on the train platform. He brought her the only food he could find, a raw onion and a piece of bread. She was covered, head to foot, with lice.

Pesha's only son Boris died in Ulyanofsk on December 1, 1941.

Sarah's two younger sons died a few days later. Berthold-3 died on December 11, and Morris-9mos died on December 12, 1941. Ber Leib helped his cousins bury all three of their children in the Jewish cemetery of Ulyanosk.

In New York we celebrated the wedding of Martha and Meir on December 7, 1941, completely out of touch with the deaths in Ulyanosk during the very same week. Papa and Mama were not very happy people at this wedding. Papa was worried about the German advances in Russia. Mama was disturbed by Martha's marriage.

Pesha, Sarah Leah, Sarah's surviving son Boris, Fira, and Ber Leib remained together in Ulyanosk. Pesha's husband Isaac Chaikin, who had been relieved of his civilian assignment, soon joined them. Pesha and her husband then left Ulyanosk for sanctuary in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, taking Fira with them. Fira was not rid of her lice until she reached Uzbekistan and Pesha was able to locate some soap. Sarah Leah, her surviving son Boris, and Ber Leib remained together in Ulyanosk.

**Nina's Escape.** The German's siege of Leningrad had trapped Fira's widowed mother Nina in the city. By December 1941, Lake Ladoga had frozen over, and the Russians began to ship supplies to Leningrad by truck over the frozen lake at night. This route became heavily cratered by the German bombing of the truck convoys, making passage in pitch black darkness dangerous from both bombs and craters. Nina made her escape on a returning truck in the Spring when the ice had begun to melt. She saw a nearby truck fall through the soft ice and disappear. Luckily, she reached the Russian controlled zone. She then proceeded, probably by hitching rides on trains, to travel over 2,000 miles to Uzbekistan where she was reunited with Fira, Pesha, and Isaac Chaikin in 1943.



Fira recalled her reunion with her mother:

“ I could not wait to see her. When she finally arrived she looked terribly sick. She was all swollen from the hunger that the citizens of blockaded Leningrad had suffered. She didn't look like the Mom of my dreams, a young and beautiful woman. I was completely disappointed. But she presented me with two bars of chocolate she had saved for me in spite of her own hunger. I instantly realized what kind of Mom I had. My foolish disappointment was replaced with great admiration and love.”

## 2.2.6 The Rissin Family Survivors After the War

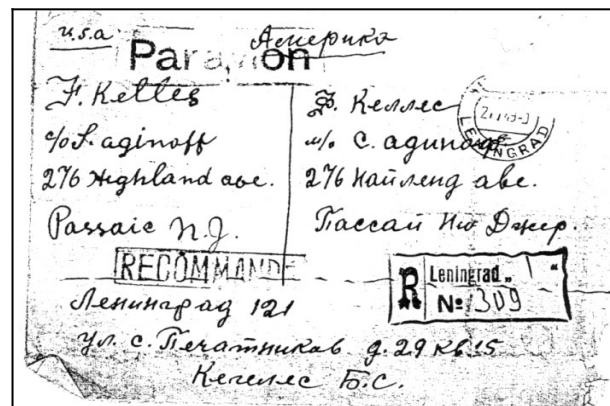
In 1945, with the war over, the families moved back to restart their lives.

Sarah's wounded husband, Isaac Gusin, was discharged from the Army. He rejoined Sarah Leah, their son Boris, and Ber Leib in Ulyanosk. Then Sarah Leah, Isaac and Boris left Ulyanosk to settle in Gomel, a town in Belorussia. A son, Semyon, was born there in 1945.

Fira, by now nine years old, and her mother Nina, left Uzbekistan in the spring of 1944 and returned to Leningrad.

Pesha and her husband moved to a different town in Uzbekistan in 1945. Four years later, in 1949, they joined Sarah Leah and her family in Gomel.

Ber Leib, who had stayed in Ulyanosk with Sarah during the war, returned to Vereschaki to search for his wife, their three children, and his extended family. He found that they had all been killed by the Germans. He also found the \$20US that he had buried. He lived in Belorussia for some time, and then went to Leningrad. There, in his late 40s, he married Nina, his cousin Leiser's widow. He thus became 12 year old Fira's stepfather.



1949-Envelope from Ber Leib in Leningrad to his sister Fanny Kelles

## Mama Got The News

Mama started writing to Russia in late 1944. Her first letter was sent to Leiser's address in Leningrad. Nina forwarded the letter to Pesha in Tashkent. Pesha responded on April 27, 1945 with a very brief note:



“ My husband and I are well. We work and make a living.

How are you getting along? How is Moishe, Itze? How are your two older sons? I want to know about everyone and everything.

Sarah Leah, her husband and two children are well. I sent your letter to her.

Be well, regards from my husband. Pesha.

Then, as an afterthought, Pesha hinted at the tragedy. She wrote:

“From Shmuel Kegeles’ family, only Ber Leib remains. His address is City of Ulyanofsk, Street address, Boris Kegeles Shmulevich.

How is his sister Frume? She should write to him. He is very lonely.”

Now, with an address for Pesha, Mama probably updated her own changed situation since the last correspondence in 1940: Papa had died, Bernie was in the army in the Pacific, Bertha and Martha had been married, Renah had been born. Mama also probably asked for a fuller accounting from Pesha about her comment on the family of Shmuel Kegeles.

Pesha’s response is worth quoting in its entirety:

“December 25. 1945

Dearest loving sister Eshka, we received your letter of September, 20 with much joy and heartfelt tears. Dear sister, you write of your son in the Pacific, but you forgot to send us his address.

My dear sister what happened to your husband? He became sick? I together with my husband feel with you your sorrow. In such a short time so much sorrow.

How do you live who helps you? Are you working? I am happy to hear that everyone else is well. A mazel-tov to you my sister on the marriage of your two daughters and another mazel-tov for your grandchild. I wish they all feel well and happy, nachas, and so further. From Izzy and Moishe I have not received a letter.

Dearest you ask about Sarah Leah. I sent you a full letter and told everything but perhaps you did not receive it. Sarah Leah, her husband and two children are now in Gomel. I haven’t seen Sarah Leah since 14 December, 1941. Her husband was wounded but he is all right. Their address (in Gomel).



Our father's Yahrzeit is October 10, 1941. He fell from a fascist bullet in Vereschaki with all the other Jews. Our good hearted brother Leiser fell the 20th of September, 1941, on the battlefield while defending his city Leningrad. His wife and daughter are well. Their address is the old one.

My small child also is gone, a victim of the big war. As we ran from the advancing Germans he became sick and we lost him on the 1st of December 1941. The same thing happened to Sarah Leah's two sons who died, one on the 11th of December and the second the 12th of December 1941. Three small children from two sisters lie in a Jewish cemetery in the city of Ulyanofsk, before called Birska, together, on the edge of the Volga River.

Sister Eshka. I want you to keep this letter and you should never again ask how and what. It is very hard for me to remember all that I've lived through in time of war.

Now my dear sister do you know where we are? It is Uzbekistan, 2 hours from the city of Tashkent where there is hardly a winter and where one needs no winter clothes. We are here temporarily. Where we will go from here we do not know. We are no longer young people. I am already 40 years old and not too strong with a broken heart.

You ask what clothes we need and so further? We both work and have no needs and thank God we are not naked. From the difficulties of the war we are not used to delicatessen and sweets. In putting our enemies on their knees we have begun to forget all the difficulties of the war. We are busy with our building.

Dearest, I together with my husband send regards to all your children and their families, and Morris and his wife. Send the address of your son who is in the army.

How is Fanny? From her family only Ber Leib is left. He was in the army. I kiss you all separately. Write. My husband sends hearty wishes. Your sister, Pesha."

I can remember the day that I think this letter arrived. Mama began crying and continued to wail for over an hour non-stop. I had never seen her in such a state before. I was very frightened that something was about to happen to us. I sat very still so as not to cause further aggravation. When she finally stopped crying and I could talk to her, I asked her what was wrong. She answered, "You don't have to know." Although I vaguely knew that I had "relatives" in



Russia, I never knew that they were aunts and cousins. All of that “I didn’t need to know.” I was only 13. But Mama didn’t tell anyone else, either.

Pesha’s letter suggests that Mama had previously offered to send food and clothing to help Pesha. By now, Mama had been working for two years since Papa died. I was her only dependent. She was more able to offer financial help than before the war. But Pesha said that she didn’t need any help from Mama. So Mama wrote a letter of consolation for Pesha’s losses. Pesha responded almost immediately:

“August 7, 1946

Dearest Sister Eshke, your letter of July 3 was received with great joy. It gives us much happiness to know you are all right.

Dear sister, do not upset yourself for us. We do not live as poorly or as bad as you think. We have enough food and clothes. Don’t forget. We both work. I beg you again to believe we don’t live badly. If only we were as rich in our own blood as we are sated with bread.

Dear sister, I wish to thank you for your warm and lovely letter. I thought that it was written with the hand of the mother who bore me. It was a mother’s letter from its depths looking on me, a deep loving look from our dear mother. Such a wonderful loving look as only a mother can give. Another such mother could not be found. She was the best...but you my sister have such a mother’s heart. May God give you health and good fortune and nachas from your children.

Here we try, my sister. I wish no one the great pain I must bear as a mother that has lost her long awaited child...my great pain will go away together with me. That is how fortune is with me. We can not escape it. That is what everyone says.

Dear sister, our father and mother have no names. Sarah Leah’s sons, one Berthold, a name after mother, and a second Morris, a name after our sister Mary, have both been lost in time of war. Now, they should live and be well, her older boy Boris is 10 years old and is named after Blume. The younger, Sholom, aged 2 years and 3 months, is named after someone from Israel’s family. I wish your daughter mazel brochos for giving a name after her grandfather (our father).

Dearest, you write that you have sent us a package. In the meantime we have not received it. Know my sister and also my brother that I very much wish to meet you. It is foolish but I wish it...that is how the song is sung...what have you to say to this.



By the time this letter reaches you it will be the time of Rosh Hashanah. So allow me to wish you all a healthy, happy, and mazeldika year. Be well and successful. I wish everyone and kiss everyone separately. Your sister, sister in law and aunt. Pesha.”

18 West 23rd Street  
New York 10, N. Y.

ФАКТУРА D 18938 CV

**ДУБЛИКАТ**

НА ПРОДУКТЫ И ВЕЩИ ДЛЯ  
ЗНАЧКА НАДОШЕСТЬ

Параллельно отправляем: почтой

ОТПРАВИТЕЛЬ—SENDER		ПОЛУЧАТЕЛЬ—ADDRESSEE	
Имя и фамилия	Адрес	Имя и фамилия	Адрес
Ирина Казимир	174 BACIDA STREET BROOKLYN 59, N. Y.	Евгений СОРА-ЛЕВУЧЕНКО	ПРОЛЕТАРСКИЙ РАЙОН № 23 ГОР. ГОМЕЛЬ БССР

Порядок	Наименование товара	Единица	Количество	Цена	Всего	Аванс	Сумма по акту
1.	КОЖАНИН ВОШ	шт.	1	1.41			
2.	КАРТО ЗАВЕР. Linder Wolf	шт.	2,60	2,60			
3.	КАРТА И ЗАВЕР. Linder Wolf	шт.	1,75	1,75			
4.	БЕЛЫЕ ВЯЗ. New Terman	шт.	1,00	1,00			
5.	БЕЛЫЕ ВЯЗ. New Terman	шт.	1,00	1,00			
6.	БЕЛЫЕ ВЯЗ. New Terman	шт.	1,00	1,00			
7.	БЕЛЫЕ ВЯЗ. New Terman	шт.	1,00	1,00			
8.	БЕЛЫЕ ВЯЗ. New Terman	шт.	1,00	1,00			
9.	БЕЛЫЕ ВЯЗ. New Terman	шт.	1,00	1,00			
10.	БЕЛЫЕ ВЯЗ. New Terman	шт.	1,00	1,00			
11.	БЕЛЫЕ ВЯЗ. New Terman	шт.	1,00	1,00			
12.	БЕЛЫЕ ВЯЗ. New Terman	шт.	1,00	1,00			

Итого: 12,00

Без заполнения всех граф от 1 по 9 данной фактуры и отсчета подписки и оплаты на ней — фактура считается недействительной.

Подпись: Louis Bersandky

WORLD TOURISTS, INC.

WORLD TOURISTS, INC.  
1845 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK 23, N. Y.

7/1/49

Dear Friend:

We have just been informed that your parcel shipped under License No. 8938 CV is undeliverable because of Refusal.

1. To have this parcel sent to someone else, please send us the new name and address. The Soviet charges are: for European address \$3.50, for Asiatic address \$4.80.

2. To have this parcel returned there is a charge of \$3.50.

3. If you wish this parcel abandoned there is no charge. It is urgent that you reply by return mail since we must cable our instructions to the Soviet Union at once.

WORLD TOURISTS, INC.

Although we don't have any similar correspondence between Mama and Sarah Leah, we know that Mama did try to send clothing to Sarah Leah in Gomel.

Mama spent almost \$50 dollars, which equated to about two months rent for our apartment on Manida Street, a lot of money for a widow employed in a sweatshop, to send clothing to Sarah Leah. The manifest from the shipping company, World Tourist Inc., shows the items.

But Mama's effort to help Sarah Leah was in vain. Sarah Leah apparently refused to accept the delivery of Mama's package. The receipt from the shipping company tells the story. Mama had wasted her money.



Mama inquired about the refusal from the shipping company. The refusal was "confirmed". The people at the company wrote a letter to Sarah Leah urging her to accept the parcel. Mama wrote her own note on the backside of that letter.....and then Mama



never mailed the letter. We will never know why she didn't mail the letter. We don't, however, have any more letters from either Pesha or Sarah Leah.

Mama had also purchased postal vouchers to send to her sisters to cover the cost of their letters to her. Here is a copy of a coupon that she didn't send.

By 1946, Mama had started her new life as a self sufficient person. These next few years may have been her happiest. She simply put her Russian family behind her.

### **Later years.**

**Nina and Ber Leib.** Nina had grown up in an assimilated family of a Belarussian village of Astashkovichi, where her family may have been the only Jews, while Ber Leib had led as observant a Jewish life as he could in Vereschaki. However, in spite of Ber Leib's new presence in the household, Nina continued to run her household and raise Fira in a mainly secular-Jewish but non-kosher way. Fira recalls:

“She (Nina) often cooked and served Jewish dishes. She always baked homemade matzoh for Passover. On all the Jewish holidays we had the special Jewish dinners.”

But Ber Leib couldn't fully participate. Ber Leib kept his own plate and silverware to avoid contamination by the pork products that Nina casually served at the table. He went to the synagogue alone, an hour train ride away in the center of the city, only on holidays. As he got older he went only once a year, on Passover, to buy kosher matzoh, since the government permitted only the central synagogue to sell matzoh and Nina's matzoh wasn't sufficiently kosher.

Fira recalls:

“Every summer, while he was able, Ber Leib went to Gorki to care for his mother's grave in the Gorki Jewish cemetery. (Ber Leib's mother died before the war.) He then went to the location of the Vereschaki mass grave by bike. There was no public transportation to the place. The last time he persuaded a younger man, also a Vereschaki native from Leningrad, to go together because Ber Leib was no longer strong enough to go by himself. They managed to install on the mass grave of the 60 Vereschaki Jews the Germans had murdered a post with some words “in the memory of the murdered Jews of Vereschaki”(this mass grave included Ber Leib's first wife and his three children).”

**Pesha:** Pesha died in Gomel. Her only son Boris had died at Ulyanosk in 1941. The 1958 picture is in Gomel.





**1958 Pesha(53), Fira (23), and Sarah Leah (51)**



**1966 Fira and Efim Khazan (l), Pesha and Isaac Chaikin (r)**

**Fira:** Fira matured in Leningrad. She married Efim Khazan, a Leningrad native in 1965. They moved in with Nina and Ber Leib. Soon Fira bore Efim a daughter who they named Victoria

### **Where are they now?**

**Sarah Leah:** Sarah and her two surviving children, Boris and Semyon, and her grandchildren lived in Gomel until 1990, when they immigrated to Israel. Sarah died there in 1993. Saul (Kravitz) went to visit Sarah's family when he lived in Israel, but could establish no continuing relationship with either of the sons' families.

**Fira:** Fira's daughter Victoria and her husband Alexei Lopuhkin immigrated to the US in 1988. Fira, Ber Leib, and Nina had planned to join them, via Austria, in March of 1990, but **Nina** died several weeks before their departure.



**1990: Ber Leib and Nina**

Fira and **Ber Leib** came to New York and lived together in 1990.

On Ber Leib's arrival, he presented Victoria with the \$20US that he had hidden from the Germans during WW II. Ber Leib saw the birth of Victoria and Alexei's son Eliezer. Then he died in Brooklyn, on February 20, 1991, at the age of 90. Following



her divorce from Alexei, Victoria married Eugene Agaronnik. They have a daughter named Nicole and a son Levi, in addition to Eliezer.

### **The Impact of Forces of Assimilation**

Nechemia Zvi had to contend with the strong forces of assimilation that had begun building in Russia during the 1800's. He lived in a secular Jewish village, but he himself followed Jewish tradition as best he could without a local synagogue. Yet his family was strongly influenced by their circumstances. The result of this influence is apparent in the lives of two of his sons, Morris and Leiser.

Morris (formerly Moishe) went to America in 1914 at the age of 18 with little knowledge of synagogue community life. Like all the Jewish émigrés, he listed his primary language as Yiddish on the ship's manifest. In about 1930, at age 34, he married an assimilated, second generation, American woman who, though Jewish, was not interested in either the Jewish religion or Yiddish culture. Without her encouragement, and without prior experience of synagogue participation, Morris shunned synagogues. Instead, he joined the Ethical Culture Society to associate with other Jews. He claimed to seek a more intellectual atmosphere. He brought brochures from the Ethical Culture Society to Mama. He was financially more secure than she was, and, with his American wife, felt more Americanized than Mama. He tried to show Mama the intellectual and cultural distance he had achieved from Nechemia Zvi's Yiddish world of Vereschaki. (Mama thought he was a nebish.) Morris apparently provided his son with little Jewish education of any kind. After Morris died, Leonard wrote to Mama to ask her what his own father's Hebrew and Yiddish names were.

Leiser lived with his parents, on and off, until he was 34. Then he married Nina Tseitlina from the nearby Russian village of Astashkovichi, where hers was the only nominally Jewish family. Her family didn't speak Yiddish, were non-observant, and served pork at home. Leiser, who had probably gone to a state school instead of the cheder, and had lived away from home, probably had not observed the dietary laws even before he married her. But quite surprising is how happy Nechemia Zvi was, knowing all this, to have Nina as his daughter-in-law. Beyle, had her reservations, but she didn't say that they stemmed from Leiser's drift from kashrut. On her death bed she worried about who would say Kaddish for her. Nechemia Zvi knew that it would not be Leiser.

Nechemia Zvi mentions going to synagogue in a 1938 letter from Gorki. Although he lived with Sarah Leah, he ate separately rather than eat her non-kosher food. Thus, he maintained his old ways to the end..

Nechemia Zvi's nephew, Ber Leib Kegeles, stayed in Vereschaki, married and lived there, until World War II. After the war, when he had to face living outside Vereschaki, he too seems to have become resigned to the inevitability of assimilation by succeeding generations, also maintaining his old ways, eating separately, to the end.



I wonder how surprised Nechemia Zvi would be if he could see how many great-grandchildren of his daughters Eshke (Mama) and Sarah Leah are attending Jewish schools in America and Israel.

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Much of the Pre-World War II information in this section is from the Yiddish letter collection. Photographs and some World War II events were related by Fira. The observations about assimilation are my own.

### 2.2.7 Vereschaki in 2009

I had contacted the Jewish community of Gorki, &lams, in 2001, as I completed this Kravitz 1-j'arni Ey History, Lo learn of any information that they had about the execution of the Jews of Vereschaki in 1941. I learned little, other than their hope that their government would *erect* a monument at the site. I did send them something, a letter or a picture, that caused my name to be recorded there.

Their hoped fi.w monument was erected in 2009. Evidence for the inscription was gathered hy regional historian, Alexander. Litin, who was able to find two people to give him oral recounts of the execution,

Then, in 2010. Vladimir Livshits, another Jewish historian in Gorki, Helms, began to search the Gorki archives for a book he planned to write, He lOund my name as a possible source of additional information and asked his U.S. contact, Mrs. Natasha Grinberg, of Hollywood, Florida, to see if she could **find nric** somewhere in the U.S. Somehow she did, and he was able to ask *me* for the information I had offered nine years earlier,



I sent him Chapter 2 of this Kravitz Family History. In exchange, he sent inc the information about the executions at Vereschaki in 1941 that

Alexander Litin had gathered. This section contains that information. This consists of two memoirs based on eyewitness reports and photos of the site of Vereschaki as it appeared **when the monument wits erected in 2009.**



One of the memoirs was given by a resident of Potashi. The other was by a resident of Yurkova. As shown on the map, these villages were probably less than half mile from Veresebaki.

The first memoir is from an 82 year-old woman who knew Boris Kegeles, my mother's second cousin, and also Fira's stepfather. You can see his picture on page 36 of the Family History. The monument marks the grave of his family and my grandfather, Nehernia Zvi Rissin,, and many **others**\_

### **Memoir No 1. Recorded by A. Litin in 2009 \***

My name is Pyrkina Melanya Fedorovna (Zolotarskaya). I was born in Potashi in 1928, [Unclear if Zolotarskaya is Melanya's maiden or married name]

At the outset of World War H my family lived in Yurkova, where I now live. The village of Verschaki was nearby; the majority of its prewar inhabitants were Jews. There was a store there, a 7<sup>th</sup>-grade school, a fulling workshop.

In school we studied together with the Jewish children. The daughter of Berka (Boris) Kegelis was my schoolmate. Berka was a blacksmith in Veresehaki before the war and left to fight [ in the Russian Army] during the war. While Berka was away in the Army, the Germans came and shot his daughter Pilya (13) , my classmate, and his wife. Boris' son Arka was somewhat older me; he ran away from the Germans, but was' ound and killed near the village of Dyatel' in the Duhrovensky region. That village was about five kilometers from Vereshchaki,

Berka survived the war and came back to Yurkovo to work in our kolkhoz [collective farm] as a blacksmith; his blacksmith shop was not far from our house. He stayed for several years and then left.

Berka visited several times in the '70s and '80s, He was the one who placed the metal marker on the spot of the shooting [ of most of the Jews in Vereshchakil. The village soviet has now placed a monument there.

I remember the names of several other Jews from Vereshchaki:

Kivol and Leyzer lived very poorly. Kivol's wife with their two daughters ran away from the Germans and wandered around the villages, Someone gave them away and they got Lilled.

A young woman named GenTa came to work in Potashi. She was an accountant, Her husband's name was Aron. They were also killed\_



A little older than me was a woman called Sarah. She was very beautiful and sang well; together with the Belorussian women she performed folk songs in **concerts**, Sarah was also killed by the Germans.

All the women from our village went to the store of a dressmaker, Mikhlya, in Vereschaki for blouses, Ella also worked there. Mikhlya was shot, but I don't remember what happened to Ena.

Only one woman from Vereschaki remained alive after the war-Faina. How she had avoided being killed I do not know. After the war she lived in Orsha, and we visited her.

## **Memoir No. 2**

My name is Borodotsky Tatyana Vasilevria. I was born in 1962 in Potashi village and grew up there, now work as a school mathematics teacher in Yurkova village.

My mother, Kudryavisev Nadezhda Petrovna was born in 1928 and grew up in Potashi. She recalls that people in Potashi coexisted peacefully with the Vereschaki Jews: they traded goods (for example, eggs on spice-cakes), and lent money. The Vereschaki store sold vegetable oil, herring and other merchandise. There was a wooden road in the village,

Then, in 1942, when she was 13 years old, my mother witnessed the execution of Jews of Vereshchaki village.

She told me that the *poiitzai* [the Nazi collaborators from the local population working as police] came to Potashi to get her neighbor, Katya Kudrjajtseva, who knew German and could serve as a translator for the Germans, My mother and another girl followed Katya to the village of Vereshchaki They didn't know what was about to happen. In Vereshchaki they saw a big, deep hole dug out in the ground. A machine *gun* had been positioned nearby. It was said that there had been only two Germans. [Natasha's comment: here the passive construction points to the fact that the girls who'd witnessed the execution were either too shocked to remember or too shocked to tell the truth], If there were any policemen, my mother doesn't remember, Then all of the Jewish inhabitants of the Vereschaki were herded toward the hole. They were women, old men, children, but very few younger men.

The Germans told the translator to tell the Jews to go 10 people at a time and lie down in the hole. There, as they lay on the ground, they were shot. No one resisted, When they all had been shot, someone covered the hole.

My mother's family lived at the far end of the village of Potashi , not too far from Vereschaki. She said that for the whole next week, a young guy visited them, They gave him food in the evening, but were very scared. They knew that they could be executed for helping Jews. Then the guy disappeared. What happened to him isn't known.



My aunt said that all the members of one family who had hidden a Jewish girl in the attic were shot. But no one knows who had noticed and informed on the family. The local people get very emotional when they speak about the tragic murder of this family.

The village of Vereshchaki was located off of the main road. Lack of financing prevented the village development and the construction of the road. After the war, the Jews didn't return to the village; only several ethnic Belorussians remained there. And in 1966-1967 the village ceased to exist.

During my childhood, in the 1970's, we grazed cows near the place of the execution [of the Jews]. It wasn't marked in any way. But when I came back [after college] in 1986 to work in the school, there was already a metal grave marker to mark the place of the Jews' execution.

Though the monument states that 101 persons were executed here, people say that more people died—those who had hid away but were informed on and killed someplace else.

**Summary: by Alexander Litin (2009), the historian from Mogilev:**

Sixty years have passed since the destruction of Vereshchaki and memories have faded. People generally recall that there never was a close social relationship between the Jews of Vereshchaki and the population of the neighboring villages (Potashi and Yurkova). There was, however, simple cooperation. When the Jews were destroyed, many people rejoiced at the left-behind belongings and the homes that had become ownerless. Many of the neighboring villagers then simply disassembled the Jewish homes. There is no evidence of any effort to rescue the Jews. Any such evidence would have been recorded in Yad Vashern,

\*Translated by Mrs. Natasha Grinberg



**Marker for Verishchaki Victims**



**The inscription: Here, in 1941, the Fascists brutally murdered 101 people, Inhabitants of Verishchaki and other villages. May their memory live forever. Erected 2009**



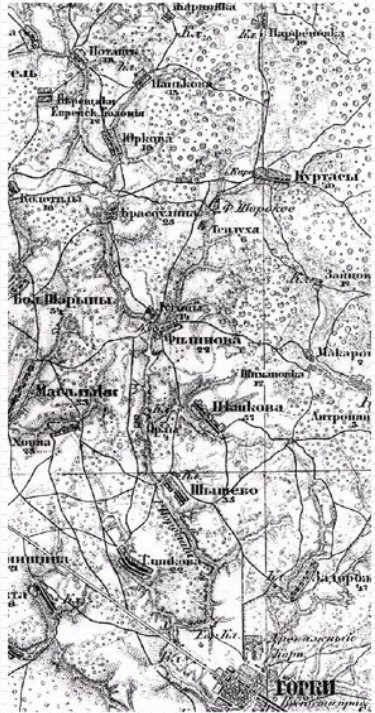


**The site of Vereschaki in 2009**



## Vereschaki

Vereschaki was located southeast of Orsha and six miles northwest of Gorki in the Province of Mogilev, Belarus. It is shown in the upper left hand corner of the map in Cyrillic as "Vereschaki, Jewish Colony". Gorki, at the bottom of the map, was the local commercial center. (Map from Library of Congress)



The Russian Jewish Encyclopedia of 1905 describes Vereschaki as an agricultural settlement in the District of Savsk, Region of Gorki, Province of Mogilev of 1,200,000 square meters of occupied area and 128 residents.

Vereschaki is also listed in the Encyclopedia of Jewish Life, Schmucl Spector (Yad Vashem), New York University Press.

The purpose of this Jewish Gen entry for Vereschaki is to provide historical information about Vereschaki that was contained in my family's correspondence with relatives in Vereschaki during the 1930's, and to make this information about the last days of the place available to Jewish Gen.

The earliest record of Vereschaki is the 1869 map at the left. Vereschaki may therefore have been one of the many Jewish agricultural settlements that were founded by the Russian Government between 1835 and 1866 to get Jews to settle the land. A description of these land grants is contained in the letter from a US Consular Official Schuyler.

For more information, <http://www.angelfire.com/ms2/belaroots/schuyler.htm>.

Vereschaki never achieved the legal status of a village or town, but remained just a "settlement". Each household had about seven acres to farm. My family had a horse and wagon, cows and chickens. My grandfather and several of the men in the settlement were blacksmiths who served the neighboring villages in barter for various agricultural products. The Vereschaki blacksmiths shared a communal iron forge.

The language of Vereschaki was Yiddish. My grandmother and mother knew little Russian. By the 1920's however, the children attended state school in nearby villages. There they learned Russian.

The nearest synagogue was in Gorki, a distance of six miles.

The Russian Famine that started in 1927 when Stalin began to collectivize agriculture finally arrived in Vereschaki in 1932. Shortages of iron and coal then forced the collective iron forge in Vereschaki to fail. Men began to leave Vereschaki to find work elsewhere.

Stalin's collective farm movement reached Vereschaki in 1933. My grandparents lost all of their land, the blacksmith forge, and their horse to the collective composed of ten nearby

villages. My grandparents were allowed to keep their house, cow and personal belongings. In exchange they received foodstuffs, but only enough for a starvation diet. A Torgsin store opened in nearby Gorki where all foodstuffs could be bought, but only for foreign exchange or precious metals. My grandparents survived the famine by spending the dollars they received from the children who had earlier immigrated to America.

Vereschaki suffered a major fire in 1939. The settlement contained sixteen homes at that time. The fire consumed ten of them. Many were rebuilt, but the number is unknown.

Germany invaded Russia on June 22, 1941. By September 1941 the Germany Army had bypassed Minsk, Vitebsk, and Smolensk and Vereschaki and was laying siege to Moscow. One month later, in October 1941, Einsatzgruppen B of the German killing squads arrived at Vereschaki.

The Germans killed the 60 Jews who remained in Vereschaki on October 10, 1941. None survived. They are buried in a mass grave. The Jewish community of Gorki has requested that the Belarus government establish a marker to note the existence and demise of Vereschaki. To date, no marker exists.

A more complete summary of my grandparents' correspondence from Vereschaki is available at YIVO, accession number 86/03, entitled The Rissin Family of Vereschaki, Belarus.

L. C. Kravitz  
Rockville, MD  
4/26/2004  
mailto:lkavitz@verizon.net

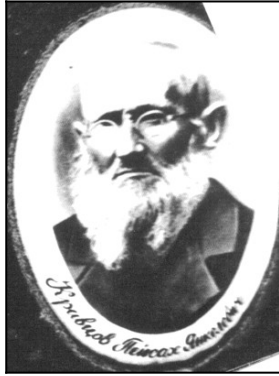
[https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/colonies\\_of\\_ukraine/vereschaki.htm](https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/colonies_of_ukraine/vereschaki.htm)



## 2.3 THE KRAVTSOVS- PAPA'S FAMILY IN RUSSIA<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3.1 The Kravtsov Family in the Ukraine, before 1941

Papa's parents were Pesach and Brucha Kravtsov. They lived in Rokytno, a village about 40 km south of Kiev in the Ukraine..



**Pesach**



**Brucha**

Brucha's parents were Moshe and Chava Leshner. I don't know anything about Pesach's family.

Papa was born in 1893. Given the Hebrew name of Aaron, his Russian name became Arkady, or Arky for short.

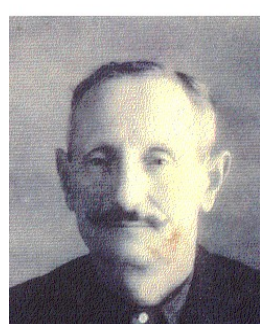
A year after Papa was born, Brucha gave birth again, this time to twin boys, Meir and Israel (Srooly). A daughter, Sarah, was born thirteen years later in 1907.



**Aaron(Papa)(24)**



**Israel (71)**



**Meir**



**Sarah (20)**

Pesach Kravtsov was a butcher. He taught this trade to his three sons. This is all I know about their life in Russia, except that Papa and his brothers were all diabetics.

Two of Brucha's sisters, Batsheva Leshner and Tsirka Leshner preceded Papa to America. Later, the youngest of Brucha's sisters, Hassy, also came to America. His aunt Batsheva paid for Papa's travel to America, took him in when he arrived, and helped him become established as a butcher.

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<sup>2</sup> ver 3/26/02



Two daughters of Israel and Meir, Genya Sheynis and Clara Tarnovsky brought all the photographs of the Russian family to America in the 1980s. Before telling of Papa's immigration, I will tell what little I know about the family that remained in Russia.

### **Papa's Family Who Stayed in Russia**

Papa left his parents, his twin brothers, age 19, and his sister Sarah, age 6, in Russia when he emigrated to America in 1913 at the age of 20, just before the onset of World War I.

Papa must have been one of those who Potok describes as emigrating to avoid conscription into the army before World War I. Israel and Meir didn't emigrate, but they found ways to become physically unfit for army service. Israel had all of the teeth on his lower jaw extracted, since men without teeth were not drafted. Meir had his trigger finger chopped off. Mama had told me that people in Russia did these things. Clara Tarnovsky confirmed what her father and uncle did to themselves when they were 19 years old.

After the War, Israel married Tatyana and Meir married Yenna



**Tatyana (Israel's wife)**



**Yenna (Meir's wife)**

The whole extended family of Pesach and Brucha Kravtsov seriously considered emigration to America in about 1920. Israel's wife, Tatyana, asked her cousin in America to fill out the immigration forms for the entire family. They apparently also went so far as to buy tickets for passage to America. According to Clara Tarnovsky, the family did not come to America because, at the last moment, Israel and Meir didn't want to. The children were later told that their parents "played cards with the tickets" until the US immigration window effectively closed in 1924. I don't know anything about the family's life between 1920 and 1941, when World War II started.

By 1940, Israel, Meir and Sarah had families of their own. The names of their children are shown below:

**Israel and Tatyana:** Clara, Fanya, and Loeva



**Meir and Yenna:** Gregory (21), Genya (19), Mischa (13)  
**Sarah and (unknown):** Joseph and Basya

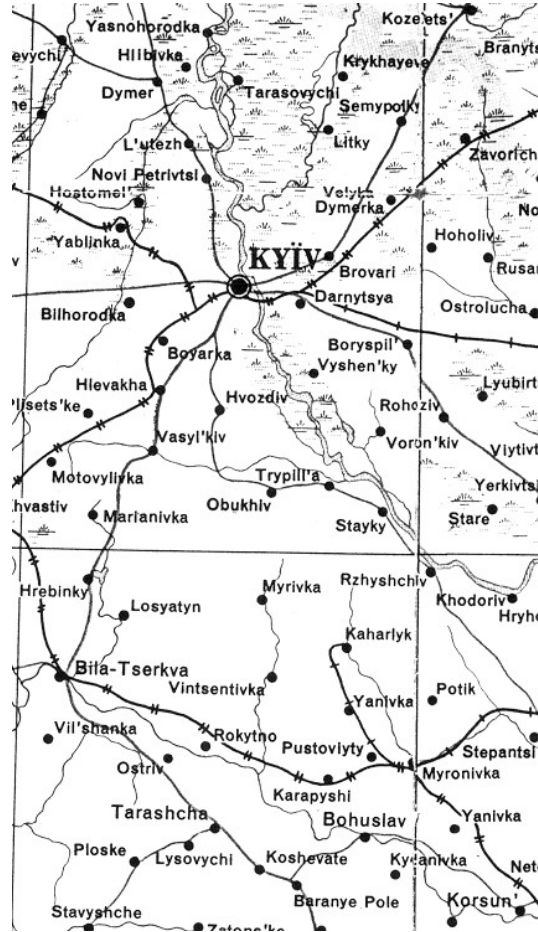
### 2.3.2 World War II

Meir's two sons, Gregory and Mischa, were both conscripted into the army when the Germans invaded Russia in June of 1941. Gregory was about 22 years old. Mischa was only 14 years old when he was drafted. Gregory died in the war.

As the German Army advanced across the Ukraine, the people in Rokytno felt too exposed to remain in the village. Many people fled north to the city of Kiev (Kyiv) where they felt the army would protect them from the Germans. Others fled aboard trains headed to the East and Siberia. (Note that the railroad goes through Rokytno).

Papa's family were among those who fled by train to the East.

Genya was 20 years old at the time. She recalled the mass confusion of the crowds on the train platform when they tried to board their train. In this confusion, Genya was somehow left on the platform as the train pulled away with the rest of the family crowded aboard a car. Genya was then in the late months of her first pregnancy. She miscarried on the train platform. The baby girl died. Genya later rejoined the family in Astrachan, which was the collection point for refugees. Then they all traveled together to Kazakstan and Tashkent where they stayed until the end of the war.



Genya told me that she never told her children and grandchildren about the war because she found it too horrible to talk about. Mischa proudly wore a lapel medal he had been awarded as a veteran of the war.

### 2.3.3 The Kravtsov Family After WW II



Papa's siblings had all died in Russia by 1970.

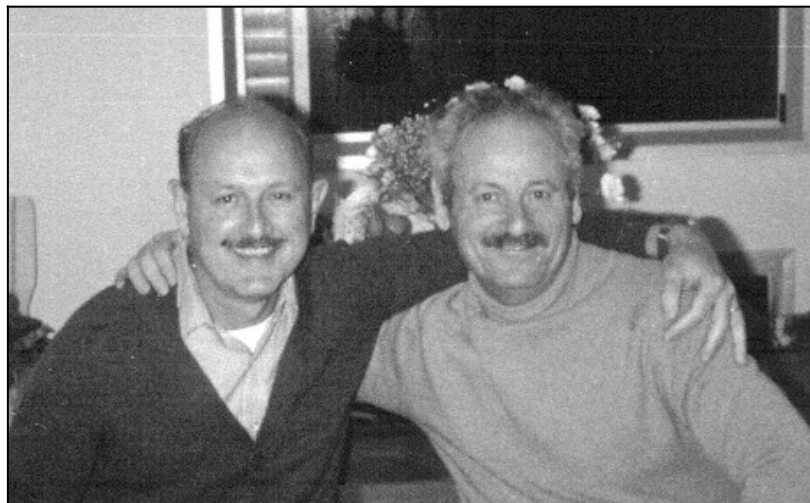
By 1975 emmigration from Russia became possible again. Mischa and his second wife, Nina, emmigrated to Israel and settled in Beersheva. His sister, Genya Sheynis, immigrated to Brooklyn with her children. Their cousin, Clara Tarnovsky, also immigrated to Brooklyn with her husband and family.

**Mischa** was the first of these cousins that I met. He and Nina were living in Beersheva while Saul was spending his junior year at Ben Gurion University, also in Beersheva. Genya had given Martha her brother Mischa's address, which Martha had sent to Saul. Saul then proceeded to "discover" Mischa and his wife Nina.

When Marge and I visited Saul, he took us to meet Mischa and Nina in their apartment. I was shocked to see that Mischa and I could have been twins. We were perfect look-alikes.



**Tombstones of Israel and Tatyana Kravtsov. (The cemetery is in Rokytno)**



**I first met Mischa (r) in 1981. Are we twins?**

Mischa remembered a story that that he must have heard from his parents about Papa's departure from their town. Except for one detail, the story was the same one that Mama had told me, and she must have heard it from Papa. The essence of Mischa's story is that the entire family came to the train station in Rokytno to see his uncle Arky leave for America. Mischa even remembered the date.



(But Papa told Mama one additional fact that Mischa's parents hadn't told him. Papa had neglected to pack his talis and tefillin when he left home. When Papa's father, Pesach, discovered this at the train station, he ran back to the house to bring them to Papa before the train left.)

Mischa asked me why Papa didn't send for the family in the early 1920s before the US applied immigration quotas. Mischa had earlier told Saul that they "played cards" with the tickets his mother's cousin had sent. Thus he was suggesting that if Papa had pressured his brothers Meir and Israel, they might have come to America.

Mischa had been a cattle veterinarian in Russia. His job in Israel was on a poultry farm. He considered it beneath him.

Mischa and Nina moved from Israel to Brooklyn shortly after I met them. Subsequently, Mischa and Nina separated.



**Genya (Dec'97)**



**Clara (Dec'97)**

Genya Sheynis was widowed in Russia. Clara Tarnovsky lost her husband Izya in 1996 in America. Mischa suffered a stroke in 1998.

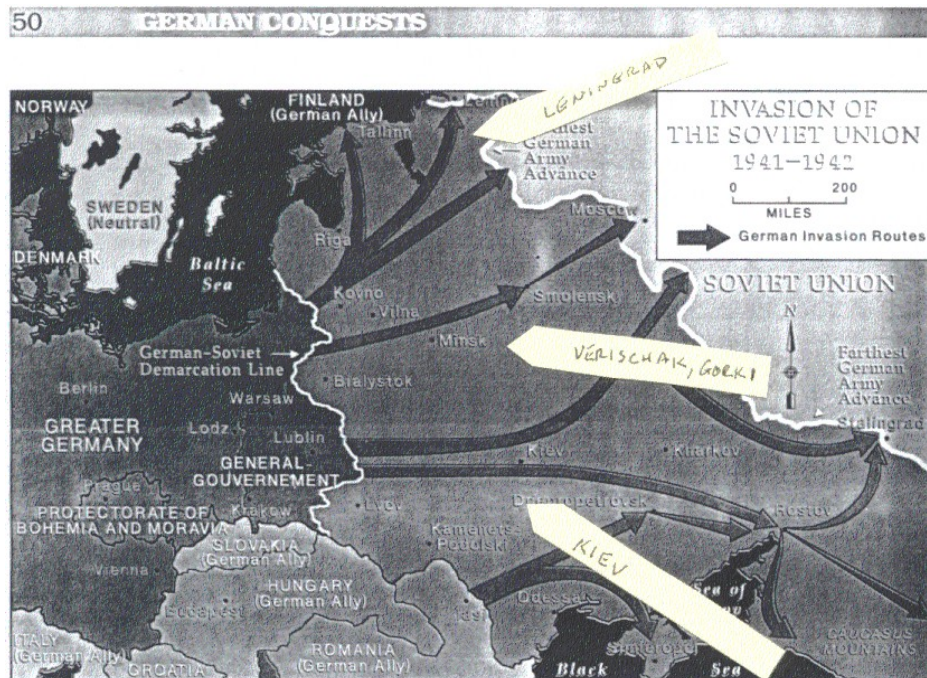


## 2.4 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

### 2.4.1 German Invasion of Soviet Union

This supplementary information is not part of the family history. It is included to provide some convenient background for future readers who may not know much about World War II.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union, code-named Operation Barbarossa, began on June 22, 1941. It was the largest German military operation of World War II. More than three million German soldiers, reinforced by half a million auxiliaries from Germany's allies (Finnish, Romanian, Hungarian, Italian, Slovakian, and Croatian troops, and a contingent from Spain), attacked the Soviet Union across a broad front, from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south. Three German army groups advanced deep into Soviet territory. The Soviet leadership had refused to heed warnings of the impending German attack, so Germany achieved tactical surprise and the Soviet army was initially overwhelmed. Millions of Soviet soldiers were encircled, cut off from supplies and reinforcements, and forced to surrender. By early September 1941, German forces were at the gates of Leningrad in the north, Smolensk in the center, and Dnepropetrovsk in the south. German troops continued to advance to the outskirts of Moscow.



Yet after months of campaigning, the German army was exhausted. Its supply lines were hampered by the great distances involved (Moscow is almost 1,000 miles east of Berlin). German forces were also unprepared for winter fighting, having expected the Blitzkrieg tactic to result in the swift surrender of the Soviet Union. Winter conditions hampered major military operations and took a significant toll on German soldiers. In December 1941, the Soviet Union launched a counter-offensive which was initially successful in forcing a German retreat from the outskirts of Moscow. But by April 1942, German forces were able to stabilize the front east of Smolensk. Germany resumed the offensive in the spring of 1942 with a massive attack in the south toward the city of Stalingrad on the Volga River and the oil fields of the Caucasus. By August 1942,



German forces neared the city. With the battle for Stalingrad, German domination of Europe was at its height.

## 2.4.2 Einsatzgruppen

The Einsatzgruppen were described in a box in Section 2.2.4. The map below shows the towns where they conducted major killings.



## 2.4.3 German Killing Activity Near Verischak.

The work of the Einsatzgruppen killers is well documented for the nearby cities of Vitebsk and Smolensk. Verischak met the same fate.

**VITEBSK**, in the northeastern region of the Belorussian SSR, is known from the eleventh century. Jews lived in Vitebsk from the late sixteenth century, and the city was a center of Hasidism. Before World War II there were about fifty thousand Jews there. On July 11, 1941, Vitebsk was occupied by the Germans and was partially destroyed and burned down in the battle. The liquidation of the Vitebsk ghetto began on October 8, 1943, on the pretext that it was a source of epidemics. The slaughter lasted three days. Jews were taken to the Vitba River and shot there. Their bodies were thrown into the river. When Vitebsk was liberated by the Soviet army on June





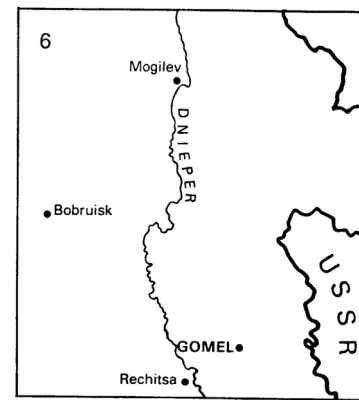
26, 1944, there were no Jews in the city. BIBLIOGRAPHY Karuh, B., ed. Vitebsk. Tel Aviv, 1957. (In Hebrew.) SHMUEL SPECTOR

**SMOLENSK**, city in the western part of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, close to Belorussia; the administrative center of Smolensk Oblast (district) and one of the oldest Russian cities. Jews lived in Smolensk from the fifteenth century. Before World II more than 13,000 Jews lived there, out of a total population of 156,677. On July 16, 1941, the Germans captured the part of Smolensk on the west bank of the Dnieper, and the part on the east bank was taken on July 29. Major sections of the city and its outskirts were destroyed in the fighting. Before the occupation, however, most of the population, including the majority of the Jews, had been evacuated from the city or had left on their own. In the first few months of the occupation, Smolensk was the headquarters of Einsatzgruppe B. At the beginning of December 1941, Einsatzgruppe B published statistical data on the city's population at the time, according to national origin. The total population was 24,450; the Jews are not listed among the nationalities, and it may therefore be assumed that by that time all of them had been liquidated. Smolensk was liberated by the Soviets on September 25, 1943. BIBLIOGRAPHY Ehrenburg, I., and V. Grossman, eds. The Black Book of Soviet Jewry. New York, 1981. See pages 253-257. SHMUEL SPECTOR



**Gomel**, further to the south, was the city that Pesha and Sarah Leah made their homes after the war.

**GOMEL**, city in BELORUSSIA. In the nineteenth century Gomel had a Jewish population of over twenty thousand (56 percent of the city's population). On the eve of World War II, fifty thousand Jews were living in the city, a third of the total population. The Germans occupied Gomel on August 19, 1941. In the two months that passed between the Germans' invasion of the Soviet Union and their capture of the city, many Jews succeeded in fleeing from Gomel into the Soviet interior. Once the city was in German hands, the military governor, Schwach, ordered the Jews to wear the yellow badge. A ghetto was established in Gomel, divided into four parts. In addition, three camps were set up for Jews: the Monastyrsk camp, with eight hundred Jews; Novo-Lubiensk, with five hundred Jews; and Novaya Belitsa,





with two hundred. The inmates of these camps did not receive any food rations. At a later stage a fourth camp was set up in Povski Bazarchik, for Jews from foreign countries; its inmates were employed in clearing mine fields near the front line. According to a December 1941 report by Einsatzgruppe N, 2,365 Jews were executed for having given aid to the partisans. They were apparently buried in military trenches near Leshtsinets on the way to Rechitsa. That same month, another 4,000 Jews from Gomel were put to death, in antitank ditches 5.6 miles (9 km) from Gomel, on the way to Chernigov. The women and children were gassed. Gomel was liberated by the Soviets on November 26, 1943.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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SHALOM CHOLAWSKI

#### 2.4.4 The LIPACK FAMILY

Our connection to the Lipack family is through Beyle's sister Zire. Zire became the matriarch of the Lipack family in America. Her son Louis opened his home to Mama when she immigrated to America. The Lipack records provide important clues about the original settlement of our family in Vereschaki.

The following information was derived from the Ships Manifests and the US Census Reports in the National Archives in Washington DC.

The first Lipacks in America were Louis (Eliezer) and Rebecca Lipack and their son Meyer. The 1910 Census Report shows the following: They were living at 144 River Street in Red Bank, NJ with four children: Meyer, 10, Sarah, 5, Fanny, 3, and Rosie, 1 ½. Meyer was born in Russia. The others were born in America.

Louis and Rebecca were both 36. They had been married 11 years. Rebecca had had 5 children, only 4 were living. They arrived in 1900. Louis was already a naturalized citizen. He worked as a clothing cutter. Living with them was a brother Joseph, 23, single, born in Russia, arrived in 1901 and naturalized. (This census report is available in the Monmouth County listings for Red Bank, River Road.)

Zire Lipack, 50, Louis' mother, (Beyle Rissin's sister) arrived on 15 July 1909 on the SS Russia from Libau, Latvia. She gave her place of residence as Kovno and her relative there as Sore Lipack. She gave her destination as her son Louis Lipack in Red Bank.

Zire Lipack, now 55, arrived again on 11 November 1913 on the SS Prinz Friedrich Wilhelm from Bremen, Germany. With her were her husband Berl, 57, and their son Yankel, 32. Their destination was her son Leiser (Louis) at 252 Shrewsbury Rd in Red Bank. They gave their place of residence in Russia as Minsk. They also gave their places of birth as Minsk. Berl gave his occupation as bookbinder. Yankel gave his occupation as



bartender. They had difficulty gaining admittance to the US on account of the physical conditions of Berl and Yankel. The ship's manifest notes that Berl was in poor physical condition and Yankel had some scalp condition. The special stamps over their names show that they were admitted after later examination.

The 1920 Census shows Louis Lipack, 46, at 252 Shrewsbury Avenue in Red Bank. His household includes Rebecca, 46, Meyer, 19, Sarah, 14, Fanny, 12, and Rose, 11. ( This census report is available in the Soundex files under code L120, Roll 127. The card misspells the name as Le Pac).

#### Analysis:

Berl and Zire Lipack were born and lived in Minsk. Berl was born in 1857 and Zire in 1859. Their son Yankel was born there and the other children were probably also born there. Their son Louis was the first one to come to America.

The reports show that Louis and Rebecca were married in Russia in 1899 and had one child there (Meyer). They came to America in 1900. By 1910, ten year old Meyer had survived but another had not. ( Rebecca may have given birth on board the ship and the baby did not survive.) They subsequently had three children born in America.

Joseph Lipack, was the second Lipack to come to America. He came to America in 1901 at the age of 14. He lived with Louis and Rebecca at least until 1910.

Zire came to America alone in 1909, to Louis' home in Red Bank. Sometime before 1913 she went back to Minsk to bring her husband Berl and son Yankel to America. She was not in Red Bank for either the 1910 census or the 1920 census.

The address in Kovno that Zire gave on the manifest of her 1909 transit was that of Sore Lipack. This may have been a relative of Berl's or possibly her daughter Sophie living in Kovno.

The evidence that Zire (Abramowitz) was born in Minsk suggests that the Abromowitz family lived in Minsk in 1858, when she was born, before it moved to Vereschaki. Zire's sister Beyle was born in 1865, either in Minsk or Vereschaki. Vereschaki itself was founded between 1834 and 1859.

The Abramowitz family may have moved to Vereschaki from Minsk with their two daughters sometime after 1865. Zire, at age 17, married Berl, 18, from Minsk in 1874 and they lived in Minsk. Beyle married Nechemia Zvi and stayed in Vereschak with her parents.



### 3. MAMA AND PAPA 1910-1917

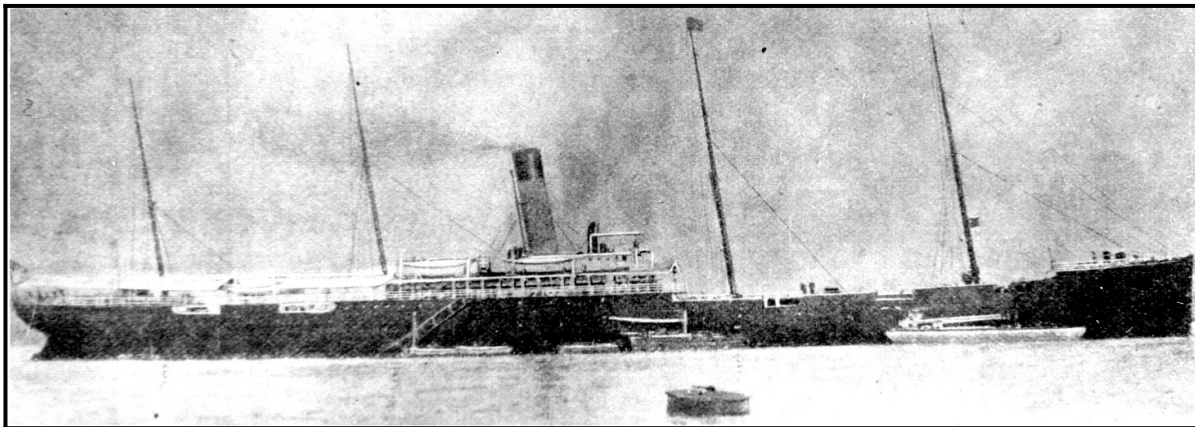
#### 3.1 MAMA IMIGRATED TO AMERICA IN 1910

Mama traveled with her father, Nechemia Zvi, by wagon from Vereschaki as far as Orsha. Then she boarded some paid wagon transport for the trip to Vitebsk. Twenty five years later, in 1935, Nechemia Zvi recalled her departure in a letter to Mama:

“Eshke, I recall well the last time we saw each other. Then I traveled with you to Orsha and there was a big thunderstorm. As you left me to go to the peasant on the wagon I felt great duress. And I looked at you from afar, until you had flown away and I could no longer see you.”

From Vitebsk, Mama traveled by train to the Latvian port of Libau (now Liepaja) on the Baltic Sea coast. (Libau ( Liepaja) was a port city that benefited greatly when it was connected to the Russian railway system in the 1890s.)

Mama sailed from Libau on September 13, 1910 aboard the SS Lituania.



**S.S. Lituania ( Built 1889)**

**This ship sailed between Libau, Rotterdam, and New York from 1907 to 1912. Built in Belfast, it was 400 ft long, 45 feet wide, and sailed at 14 knots. It was sunk by a German submarine in the Mediterranean Sea in 1918.** (Photo from the Steamship Historical Society Collection in Baltimore.)

Mama told me that she didn't have enough money to buy a steerage place inside the ship. She could only afford to sit on the open deck, first across the Baltic Sea, and then across the Atlantic Ocean.

Immediately upon boarding the ship she hustled to get a seat with her back against the ship's single smokestack where she would be warm. She only ate the food that she had brought with her. The exposure to the sun and fresh air helped her to avoid the seasickness that was pervasive below deck. She was a great fan of sun, fresh air, and the smell of salt spray, possibly from that experience.



The Manifest of the SS Lituania, dated September 13, 1910 presents information about each passenger. It was used as the visa by immigration authorities. Mama's name appears on the manifest as Esie Rissin.

Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress

S. S. LITUANIA sailing from VILNA

NAME IN FULL		Age	Sex	Calling or Occupation	Able to— Read. Write.	Nationality (Country of which citizen or subject.)	Race or People	Last Permanent Residence Country. City or Town.
Family Name.	Given Name.	Yrs. Mos.	Single or Married					
Берко	Alexander	26	✓	Black	yes	Russia	Polish	Russia Jaroslavl
Schachnowitz	Jacob	24	✓	Joiner	yes	Russia	Hebrew	Russia Gorodja
Schachnowitz	Messcha	15	✓	Joiner	yes	Russia	Hebrew	Russia Gorodja
Rudseiner	Eunlia	21	✓	Domestic	yes	Russia	Lithuanian	Russia Polunje
Rissin	Esie	22	✓	Tailor	yes	Russia	Hebrew	Russia Wereszagi
Wareszaja	Alexandra	19	✓	Domestic	no	Russia	Russian	Russia Lenagzi
Wenglafsky	Wladimir	21	✓	Tailor	yes	Russia	Polish	Russia Beladon
Rineau	Olga	19	✓	Domestic	no	Russia	Russian	Russia Worabong

**The First Page of the S.S. Lituania Manifest**  
**Mama is shown on the fifth line from the top as Esie Rissin**

The manifest gave the following information about Mama:

1. Family Name: Rissin
2. Given Name: Esie
3. Age: 22
4. Sex: F
5. Married or Single: S
6. Calling or Occupation: Tailor
- 7a. Able to Read: Y
- 7b. Able to Write: Y
8. Nationality: Russia
9. Race or People: Hebrew
10. Last Permanent Residence
  - Country: Russia
  - City or Town: Wereszagi
11. Name and Address of relative or friend in country of origin: No friends in Russia



12. Final Destination	
-State:	NY
-City:	New York
13. Blank	
14. Ticket to Destination:	Y
15. By Whom Passage Paid:	Self
16. In Possession of \$:	\$25
17. Ever Before in US:	No
18. Name and Address of relative to join in US:	Cousin: L. Lipack, 144 River Road, Red Bank, NJ
19. Ever supported by charity:	No
20: A Polygamist:	No
21: An Anarchist:	No
22. (Illegible Title):	No
23. Condition of Health:	Good
24. Deformed or Crippled:	No
25. Height:	5f,5i
26. Complexion:	Light
27: Color of:	Hair:fair;Eyes:blue
28: Marks of Identification:	None
29. Place of Birth:	
Country:	Russia
Town:	Wereszagi

The manifest is an interesting document. Thirty names are shown on each sheet. All of the people on Mama's sheet showed their "Country of Origin" as Russia. But their "Race or People" entries are either Hebrew, or Polish, or Russian, or Lithuanian, or Estonian.

The occupations of the adults are also interesting. The Hebrews are almost all tailors or tailoresses. The Russians, Poles, Estonians are domestics, cooks, farm labor, etc.

None of the passengers confessed to being a polygamist, an anarchist, or a charity case.

Mama underwent the standard immigration processing at Ellis Island. During this process an immigration officer changed her name from Rissin, as it appears on the ship manifest, to Rosen. Esie was changed to Emma. Thereafter she was known as Emma Rosen. Later, when her brothers and sister came to the United States, they too, following her, took the name of Rosen.

Upon her arrival in New York she made her way to Red Bank, New Jersey, and the home of her cousin Louis Lipack. Louis was 36 years old. He and his wife Rebecca, also 36, had immigrated to America ten years earlier from Minsk. In addition to their four children, Louis' brother Joseph, age 23, had lived with them for nine years since his



immigration in 1901 at age 14. Louis worked as a “cutter” in a garment factory in Red Bank. They took Mama in. I doubt that they had ever met before Mama arrived.

I met Louis’ wife Rebecca once when Mama dragged me, I was about 12, to some family gathering she had been invited to in Red Bank. Rebecca looked old, although she was only about 70. Mama pointed her out to me as “the woman who took me in.”

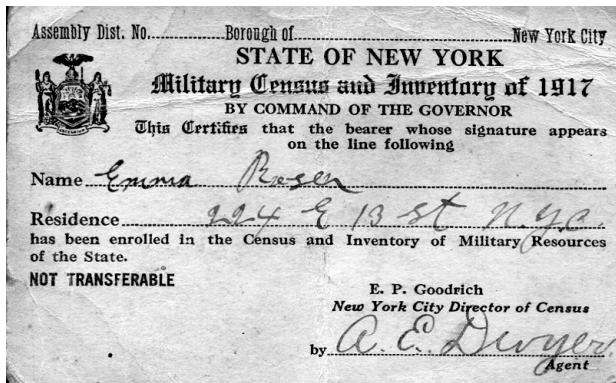
### Mama’s First Years in America

Louis probably helped Mama find work in the garment factory as a machine operator. After a short time with the Lipacks, she took a room in a boarding house on Bridge Avenue. She stayed in Red Bank for two years. Mama’s Bridge Avenue address was the destination given by Mary, who came in 1912, and by Izzy, who came in 1913.

Mama enjoyed the ocean beaches during her stay in Red Bank. She always talked fondly of Bradley Beach in Red Bank. Red Bank was rural then. Horses grazed in the fields. One day (she told Marge) the sight of a horse made her homesick for Vereschaki. So she jumped on the back of the horse and took it for a gallop.

Mama moved to New York in 1914 to work in the garment industry sweatshops, as did many of the other immigrant tailors and tailoresses. She lived on the lower East Side, at 233 E 4th St. Her room at this address was the destination given by Morris on the his ship’s manifest when he arrived in 1914.

Mama told me that she walked through Cooper Square to work in those days. When she passed Cooper Union (an Engineering College) she dreamed that, some day, she might have a son who would go to that school.



By 1917 she had moved to 224 E 13<sup>th</sup> St.

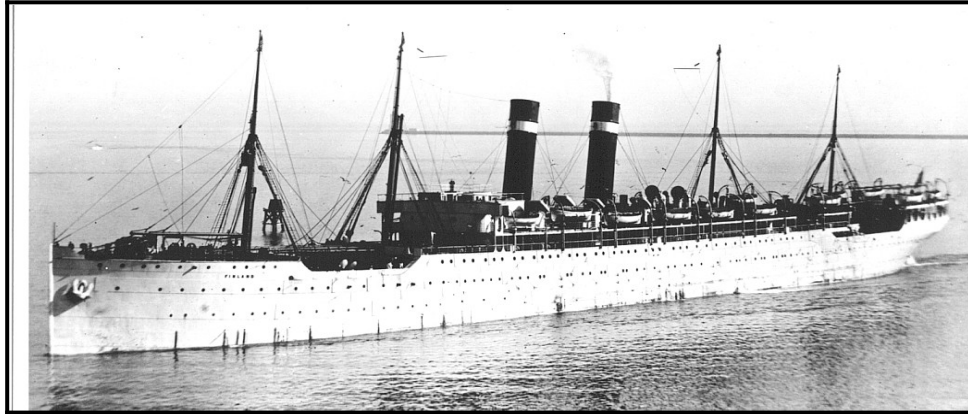
In 1917, with the entry of the United States in World War I, the State of New York took a census of all residents. Mama was included in the census as a “Military Resource”.

I don’t know how or when she met Papa. They were married in October 1917.



### 3.2 PAPA EMIGRATED TO AMERICA IN 1913

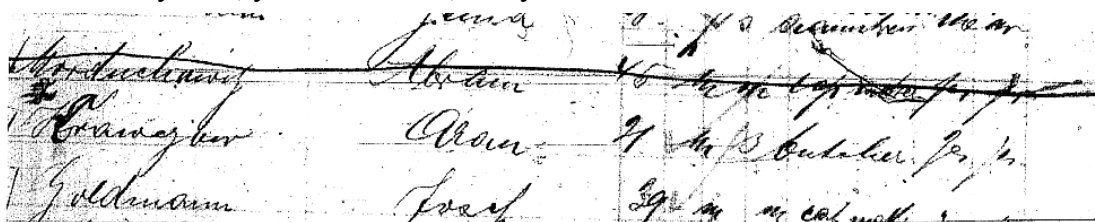
Papa left Rokytno in August 1913. He traveled by train to Antwerp where he boarded the steamer S.S. Finland on September 13, 1913. This ship is shown below:



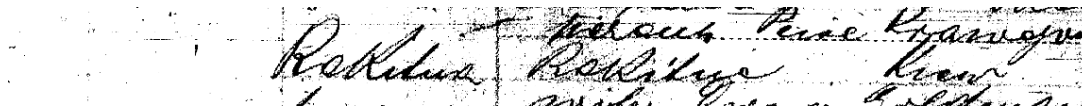
**S.S. Finland (Built 1902)**

This ship sailed between Antwerp and New York until 1923. Built in Philadelphia, it was 560 feet long and sailed at 16 knots. It was scrapped in 1927.

Papa's entry on the steerage passenger manifest is reproduced below in three segments. I'll translate it. The underlined words represent the entries written on the manifest. The first segment shows his name as Crawsjov, Aron, age 21, single, and a butcher. Then there are two "yes's", yes he can read, and yes he can write.



The second segment shows he is (by dittos) a Russian subject, of the Hebrew people, from Rokitno, with a parent Pesach Krawsjov is in Rokitno, Kiev.



The third segment shows his destination as New York, yes (he had a ticket to New York), his aunt had paid for his passage, and he had no money. he was going to his aunt, B. Ray, who lived in New York at 27 111st (Batsheva Leshner Ray, his mother's sister).



Eleven months after arriving, Papa declared his intention to become an American citizen.



87963  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
NATURALIZATION SERVICE  
1856284

# UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## DECLARATION OF INTENTION

Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date of issue of this certificate of naturalization.

State of New York, } ss:  
County of New York, }

In the Supreme Court of New York County.

I, Harry Cravitz, aged 21 years,  
Occupation Butcher, do declare on oath that my personal  
description is: Color White, complexion Fair, height 5 feet 11 inches,  
weight 160 pounds, color of hair Brown, color of eyes Gray,  
other visible distinctive marks None.  
I was born in Kiev, Russia,  
on the 19th day of October, anno Domini 1892. I now reside  
at 1532 Fifth Avenue, New York City, N. Y.  
I emigrated to the United States of America from Antwerp, Belgium,  
on the vessel Finland,  
my last foreign residence was Kiev, Russia.  
It is my bona fide intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign  
prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to Nicholas II,  
Emperor of all the Russian, of whom I am now a subject; I  
arrived at the port of New York in the  
District of New York, on or about the 23rd day  
of September, anno Domini 1913. I am not an anarchist; I am not a  
polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith  
to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein.  
I hereby swear.

Harry Cravitz  
Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of  
Court at New York City, N. Y., this 20th day  
of July, anno Domini 1914.  
WILLIAM F. SCHNEIDER,  
Clerk of the Supreme Court,  
Special Clerk.

By Leopold Munklestein  
Special Clerk.

The declaration of intention gives his age as 21 and his birthday as October 19, 1892. He used the name Harry, instead of Aron or Arkady, the Russian name for Aron, or Arky, the diminutive of Arkady that the family remembered him by, according to Mischa. He also simplified the spelling of his last name to "Cravitz".

Papa probably had to take a circuitous route to reach Antwerp from Kiev without passing through Germany. This is because the Germans were, for a while, requiring émigrés who



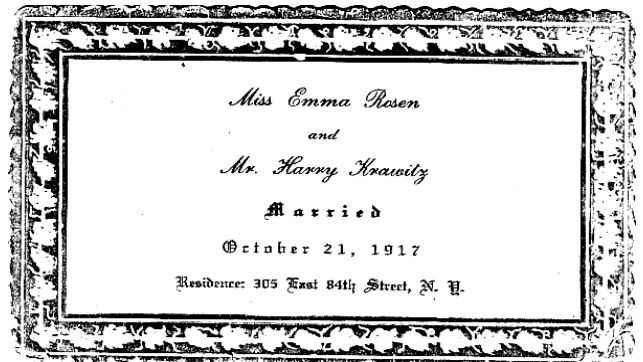
they granted passage through Germany to use German vessels. German vessels usually presented no problem for Jews, but at that time it was a problem for Jews who wanted to go to New York. The Jewish community in New York was trying to limit immigration to New York. The New York Jews therefore had made a deal with the German steamship lines under which the German steamships would take Jews only to Galveston, Texas. Since Papa didn't want to go to Galveston, he had to go around Germany to Antwerp.

Papa became established as a butcher with some help from his aunts Batsheva Ray and Tsirka Chipov. Soon he had his own butcher shop.

Then he met Mama.

### 3.3 MAMA AND PAPA WERE MARRIED IN 1917

Four years after he landed penniless in New York, he married Mama.

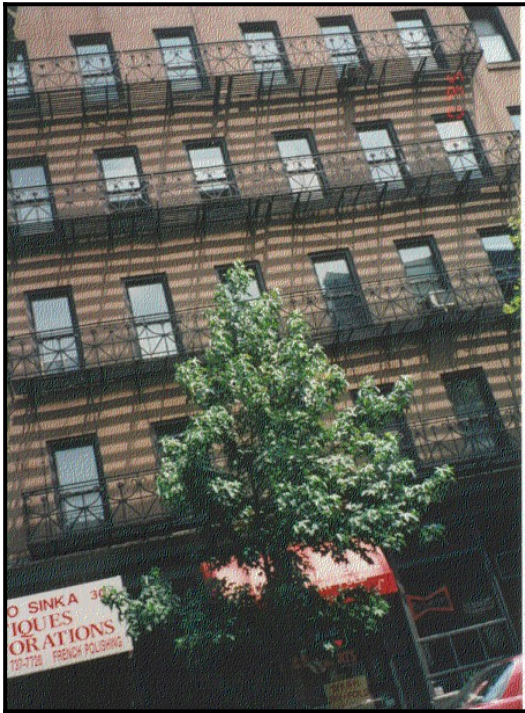


**The Marriage Announcement**

**Mama and Papa. This was probably their wedding picture.**



The building noted on the marriage announcement is still there. I went to see it in 1995.



**305 E 84th St.**

This was their first residence



**1616 Third Avenue**

The store was behind the blinds. The elevated subway train ran up Third Avenue then. It is much nicer looking now.

Papa had his butcher store on the ground floor of the 1616 Third Avenue building.

Papa received his **Certificate of Naturalization** in 1920 with the name of Harry Crawitz. Papa, had, however, used Harry Krawitz on their wedding announcement in 1917. He ignored the Certificate and used Harry Krawitz thereafter.

The certificate also shows Mama's age as 27, when she was actually 30 years old. Papa was only 28 years old. We don't know why he understated Mama's true age.



No. 1454553

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION**

Rec'd. Volume 137 Number 34/35

Description of holder: Age 28 years, height 5 feet 11 inches, color white; complexion fair; color of eyes gray; color of hair brown; visible distinguishing marks none

Name, age and place of residence of wife Emma - Age 27 yrs. Res. 1616 Third Ave

Names, ages and places of residence of minor children Bertha - Age 2 yrs. " " "

**ORIGINAL**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

*Harry Crawetz* (Signature of holder)

Be it remembered, that *Harry Crawetz* then residing at number 1616 Third Avenue, City of New York, State of New York, who previous to his naturalization was a subject of Russia, having applied to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America pursuant to law, and a Court of the United States held at New York City, on the 9 day of Nov. in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty, the court having found that the petitioner had resided continuously within the United States for at least five years, and in this State for at least one year immediately preceding the date of the filing of his petition, and that said petitioner intends to reside permanently in the United States, had in all respects complied with the law relation thereto, and that he was entitled to be so admitted, it was thereupon ordered by the said court that he be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

The testimony whereof the seal of said court is herunto affixed on the 9 day of Nov. in a year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty and four Independence the one hundred and forty fifth.

Deputy Clerk.  
(Official character of attester.)

**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

This Certificate was very important for Mama too. According to U.S. law at that time, her voting rights were based on the naturalization of her husband.

By 1920, within seven years after arriving penniless, Papa, at 28, had a wife, a two year old daughter, a business that appeared successful, and American citizenship.

Papa sought even greater business success in the next few years. All of his apparent success evaporated, however, in the Great Depression.



## **4. THE KRAWITZ FAMILY BEFORE I WAS BORN 1917-1932**

Mama and Papa had four children before me, Bertha, Joe, Martha and Bernie. My knowledge of this period is based mostly on the memories of Joe, Martha, and Bertha, although Bertha describes herself as being on the periphery of the family due to her early health problems. Joe recorded his recollections for his daughter Sue, and these are included as well.

### **4.1 BERTHA AND JOE: THE FIRST APARTMENTS 1917-1921**

After their marriage in 1917, Mama and Papa took their first apartment on East 84th street, between Second and Third Avenues. This building still exists. A picture of the building was shown in Section 3.3.

**Bertha** was born on October 20, 1918, in a Manhattan hospital. Her first home was probably on East 84th Street.

After Bertha was born, they moved to 1616 Third Avenue, the same building as the butcher store. A picture of the building was shown in Section 3.3. In 1995, when I took the picture, a flower shop occupied the corner space where Papa had his store.

The 1995 picture of 1616 Third Avenue is a bit misleading because the street looks a lot nicer now than it did then. Until 1970, an elevated train, the Third Avenue El, ran above Third Avenue. Third Avenue ran under the elevated tracks between the track's supporting pillars. The avenue below the tracks was dark and dirty, and the apartments along the El were noisy from the passing trains. The removal of the El has greatly improved Third Avenue over what it was when our family lived there. (In 1948-1949 I used to ride the Third Avenue El from High School. I passed this building many times. Mama never told me that she once lived there.)

**Joe** was born on Jan 28, 1921, in a hospital that no longer exists, at 155 East 90th street. This location is just a few blocks from the butcher shop at 1616 Third Avenue. Joe's first home was on Third Avenue.

Papa's kosher butcher business at 1616 Third Avenue was financially successful in 1921. He then began to invest in real estate using the butcher shop and the properties as collateral to borrow the money for successive investments.

### **4.2 MARTHA AND BERNIE: BURNETT PLACE 1921-1924**

The earliest real estate investment that we know about was a four story, eight apartment, walkup apartment building at 1174 Burnett Place in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx. The family moved to this building sometime during 1921, a few months after Joe was born.



I'll describe this neighborhood more fully in Section 5. The family lived in this building, off and on, for over 20 years until 1943. It is where we all grew up.

The Burnett Place building did not have central heating or central hot water when Mama and Papa and Bertha and Joe moved there in 1921. Each apartment had a gas fired hot water heater and a coal stove, with a hot top, for both cooking and heating the rooms.

Sometime during 1922, when Bertha was four, she fell down the basement steps under the arching entry stoop while chasing Papa into the basement. According to family legend, the injury of that fall caused her to have an attack of juvenile rheumatoid arthritis that dominated her life and health, and Mama's attention, for many years.

In 1996, when Alan, our family medical authority, read an early draft of this history, he challenged the legend of Bertha's arthritis. He said that Bertha probably already had the juvenile arthritis before she fell, and it hadn't been noticed by her parents. He suspected that she fell down the stairs because her walk was impaired by the arthritis. Bertha recently found a report that a gene called HLA-DR5 causes girls to get juvenile arthritis, and she claims to have been such a case. She hasn't been tested, so she is just speculating. Alan's guess is probably right. Bertha had infantile arthritis, and her parents, who still didn't speak much English, didn't recognize her condition. Whatever Bertha had, Alan is convinced that it wasn't rheumatoid arthritis. That disease causes such severe deformation of the hands that piano playing is impossible...and Bertha played the piano.

Mama took Bertha to a number of specialists to find "the cure" for her arthritis. She finally settled on Dr. Sayre who put Bertha into St. Vincents hospital in Greenwich Village. The nuns at St. Vincent's Hospital didn't speak Yiddish, which was the only language that Bertha knew when she was four years old. They taught Bertha to speak English. Bertha recalls the traction rigs they put her legs into, and that Papa brought her a live bird in a cage. Bertha stayed in St. Vincents Hospital a whole year. She was discharged in 1923.

Papa apparently had enough money to afford the year of hospitalization and all of the doctors. Medical insurance didn't exist in those days.

**Masha** was born at Burnett place on October 12, 1922. (Masha was the name we called her until she was married. Her husband thought Masha was too European. He insisted that she be called by her "American" name. We slowly adjusted to call her Martha.)

**Bernie** was also born at Burnett Place two years later on May 25, 1924. Papa was still sufficiently well off during these years that nurses were hired to be in the house, according to Martha.

The four children were born during the space of six years. Mama recalled these years to Marge in 1959, when she stayed with us in Arlington, Mass., as a time when she felt she was almost continuously pregnant.

#### **4.3 BACK TO THIRD AVENUE 1924-1925**



In 1924, after Bernie was born, the family left Burnett Place and moved to an apartment, according to Joe, around the corner from the store at 1616 Third Avenue in Manhattan. Bertha remembers that the apartment had gas jets on the walls to provide gaslight. Joe says that they attended PS 6, four blocks away. Bertha was 6 and started first grade here. Joe must have been 4 and may have started kindergarten. Bertha remembers that the bathroom was outside the school in the yard. The apartment was poorly heated. Bertha became ill again and went back to the hospital. This time she went to the Cornell Medical Center.

#### **4.4 TO THE BEACH FOR BERTHA-CONEY ISLAND 1925-1927**

In 1925, anticipating Bertha's release from the hospital, Mama wanted a place at Coney Island where she could give Bertha the sun, beach, and salt water that the doctor prescribed as follow up therapy. So Papa "bought" another residential property in Coney Island at 33rd St. and the family moved there. When Bertha came out of the hospital and rejoined the family in Coney Island, Masha wondered who this girl in a wheelchair was. While Bertha was in the hospital, Masha had forgotten she had a sister.

Bertha remembers two stone lions that flanked the front steps, and a sand yard that surrounded the house. Martha remembers this place as having two porches, one in front and one in back, so that Mama could give Bertha the rising sun in the morning on one porch, and the setting sun in the afternoon on the other. Mama took the family to the beach every day so that Bertha could get the additional therapeutic benefits of the hot sand and the salt water that Mama believed would cure her arthritis.

Bertha remembers being in second grade in Coney Island. Mama wheeled her to school in a wheelchair and the custodian carried her up to her second grade class. Masha started school in Coney Island when she was 4 in 1926. She remembers that Mama told the school she was born in January instead of October, to get her out of the house and into school.

Martha remembers getting all dressed up to go to synagogue on the holidays in Coney Island. Bertha recalls being wheeled in her wheelchair to a storefront shul on the boardwalk for the holidays. (This is the one memory anyone has of the family going to synagogue together.)

Martha remembered how she and Joe enjoyed wandering away from the house to explore the Coney Island amusements. They liked to see the "fat lady" in particular. They once came home and devoured all of Mama's garlic after seeing an exhibit advocating the health benefits of eating garlic. Mama frequently had to search the amusement area to bring them home. She once tried to frighten them by asking a policeman to arrest them if he ever saw them alone again.

If Martha's memory was correct, Masha was 3 and Joe was 5 when they admired the fat lady and ate Mama's garlic.



The group picture shows our family in 1926.



**1926 The Family**

While the family lived in Coney Island, Papa worked in the butcher store at 1616 Third Avenue. Mama's brother Izzy was still suffering from lung problems that started when he worked in a dusty gunpowder factory during World War I. To help him out, Papa, probably at Mama's "urging", took Izzy into the butcher store and taught him how to be a butcher.

Sometime about 1926-7, Papa "gave" the butcher shop at 1616 Third Avenue to Izzy and walked away from it. Martha attributed this "gift" to Papa's generosity. She remembered Papa as having a "very big and generous heart". Joe's understanding is that Papa had become overextended from his real estate speculation and was about to go bankrupt. He gave the store to Izzy as the better alternative to having it seized by his creditors. Izzy kept the store at 1616 Third Avenue for over 20 years. We have a letter from Izzy, at that address, to Bertha,

dated 1946. A picture in Section 2.2.2 shows Izzy's family in about 1928. His oldest son Milton was about the same age as Bertha. Bertha recalls that the families were close during that time.

#### **4.5 A NEW BUTCHER STORE: 147th STREET, BRONX 1927-1928**

In 1927 Papa opened a new kosher butcher store on Allerton Avenue in the Bronx. Martha remembered that the family moved from Coney Island to a rented apartment near the store. Bertha remembered living at 464 East 147th street sometime around 1927.

I don't know why the family moved so often in this period, but apparently many families did. Historian Robert Sobel has pointed out that this was a period of disinflation that caused rents to fall. Thus his family moved to take advantage of the falling rents. On the other hand, real estate speculators like Papa were hurt when they couldn't make their mortgage payments due to the falling rents they collected. The disinflation of the 1920's may therefore account for both Papa's bankruptcy and the movement of the family between apartments every year.

Martha remembered that Mama was so busy helping Papa in the store that she put Joe, Masha and Bernie into a "doctor's hospital" so that all three could have their tonsils removed in the same stay. (Doctors had facilities for minor operations adjacent to their offices. These were called "doctor's hospitals.") Mama, of course, stayed with them. That night Masha noticed that Joe was losing a lot of blood and called Mama to look at him. Mama got very upset and roused the doctor to come and save her son, which he did, and



for which Masha takes credit. (Marge recalls Mama telling her a different version of this story in 1959. According to Mama's version, Mama had the operations done in the kitchen of their apartment so that the surgeon would charge for only one visit. Mama didn't mention Masha's heroism.) Bertha stayed in the home of Papa's aunt, Tsirka Chipov, while all of this was happening. She confirmed Martha's story of Joe's bleeding.

#### **4.6 BACK TO BURNETT PLACE 1928-1943**

In 1928, after one year at the Allerton Avenue apartment, the family moved back to Burnett Place. The ages of the children were Bertha, 10, Joe, 8, Masha, 6, and Bernie, 4. Papa was thirty-six years old, had a wife and four children, a store, and several highly mortgaged residential properties.

The stock market crash of 1929 was the start of the Depression. While we don't think that Papa was an investor in the stock market, his real estate holdings were impacted. According to Martha, the tenants in the apartment buildings he owned couldn't pay the rent because, as Joe recalls, the banks closed (in 1932) and people couldn't get their money. To avoid eviction, they started tearing down the ceilings and suing Papa for non-maintenance. In the resulting court action Papa lost the building back to the bank. This disappointing loss was a setback that, with the Depression, he never recovered from.

Joe thought that Papa had owned several apartment buildings, and that he used each building as collateral to buy more buildings. He thus lost all of the buildings except for the Burnett Place building. The Burnett Place building was owned in the name of his uncle, Reuven Dranov, and was thus shielded from creditors.

When the family returned to Burnett Place in 1928, Papa set out to modernize the building with central heat and hot water. Bertha and Martha both remember that Papa set up a shop in the basement, that he installed the coal fired furnace and ran the heating and hot water pipes up the four floors, and installed the radiators himself. Bertha remembers that Papa drove a Ford with "plastic" windows.

All of the children went to PS 48, the closest grade school to Burnett Place. Bertha, then 10 years old, recalls starting PS 48 in fourth grade, then attending the girls' Junior High School at PS 60, and then James Monroe High School. She walked to PS 60, well over a mile each way. She took the subway to James Monroe.





**1931 Mama helping in the store**

Papa operated the kosher butcher shop on Allerton Avenue in the Bronx until about 1930. Joe recalled delivering orders, by subway, from this kosher shop in the Bronx to Papa's former customers downtown until about 1932, when he was 12 years old. ( Papa had grown up in a family that ran a kosher meat business in Kiev, so he knew the Kashrut requirements. Izzy must have converted the Third Avenue butcher shop to non-kosher. So Papa tried to service his old kosher clients from the store in the Bronx. Joe also recalled that Papa always joked with his customers in the store. Joe couldn't understand why Papa was so different at home.

By about 1932, Papa somehow lost the endorsement needed for a kosher butcher shop.

This forced him to close the Allerton Ave. shop. He then opened a non-kosher shop on Eighth Avenue in Harlem under the elevated trains. I recall visiting this shop in about 1937 with Mama. Mama told me that by then it was already in the hands of his former partners who "cheated Papa out of the store."

TAX NOTICE OF JACKSON TOWNSHIP FOR 1927																													
GILBERT CLAYTON, COLLECTOR POSTOFFICE, FREEHOLD, N. J., R. D. 3																													
<i>Mr. Harry Krawitz &amp; D. Rosen</i>																													
YOUR ASSESSMENT AND TAXES FOR THE YEAR 1927 ARE AS FOLLOWS:																													
Prop.	Line	Assess.	Value of Land	Value of Buildings	Total Value Land and Buildings	Assess.	Value of Personal Property	Exemptions	Net Valuation	Full Amount of Tax																			
106	1	255-258-242-4625	27	870					870	35.59																			
		635-761-770																											
			<i>Part Half 1926 Tax</i>							14.82																			
TAX RATE PER \$100.																													
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>State Road Tax.....</td> <td>.30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>State Institution Tax.....</td> <td>.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>State School Tax.....</td> <td>.360004</td> </tr> <tr> <td>State Soldiers Bonus.....</td> <td>.00471417</td> </tr> <tr> <td>State Bridge and Tunnel Tax.....</td> <td>.0002004</td> </tr> <tr> <td>County Tax.....</td> <td>.370115</td> </tr> <tr> <td>District School Tax.....</td> <td>2.18158</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local Taxes.....</td> <td>.7740271</td> </tr> <tr> <td>County Library Tax.....</td> <td>.02</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Rate for all Purposes.....</td> <td>4.2642201</td> </tr> </table>										State Road Tax.....	.30	State Institution Tax.....	.25	State School Tax.....	.360004	State Soldiers Bonus.....	.00471417	State Bridge and Tunnel Tax.....	.0002004	County Tax.....	.370115	District School Tax.....	2.18158	Local Taxes.....	.7740271	County Library Tax.....	.02	Total Rate for all Purposes.....	4.2642201
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Total Rate for all Purposes.....	4.2642201																												
TOTAL AMOUNT OF TAX, \$ <i>50.41</i>																													
FIRST HALF OF TAX			SECOND HALF OF TAX			FULL AMOUNT OF TAX																							
Received Payment,			Received Payment,			Received Payment,																							
Collector.			Collector.			Collector.																							
NOTICE OF APPEALS AND INTEREST PRINTED ON BACK OF THIS NOTICE																													
<p>Will be at following places to collect 1st half taxes—June 1st, Cassville Town Hall 10 to 12 A. M.; Holman's Store, Whitesville, 1 to 3 P. M.; June 2nd, Smith's Store, Jackson Mills, 10 to 12 A. M.; Vanliewville Store, 1 to 3 P. M.; June 3rd, Leroy Matthews' Store, Harmony, 10 to 12 A. M.</p> <p>Will be at following places to collect 2nd half taxes—Dec. 1st, Cassville Town Hall, 10 to 12 A. M., and Holman's Store, Whitesville, 1 to 3 P. M.; Dec. 2nd, Smith's Store, Jackson Mills, 10 to 12 A. M., and Vanliewville Store, 1 to 3 P. M.; Dec. 3rd, Leroy Matthews' Store, Harmony, 10 to 12 A. M.</p>																													
No Tax Bill Returned as a Receipt Unless a Stamped Envelope is Enclosed.																													

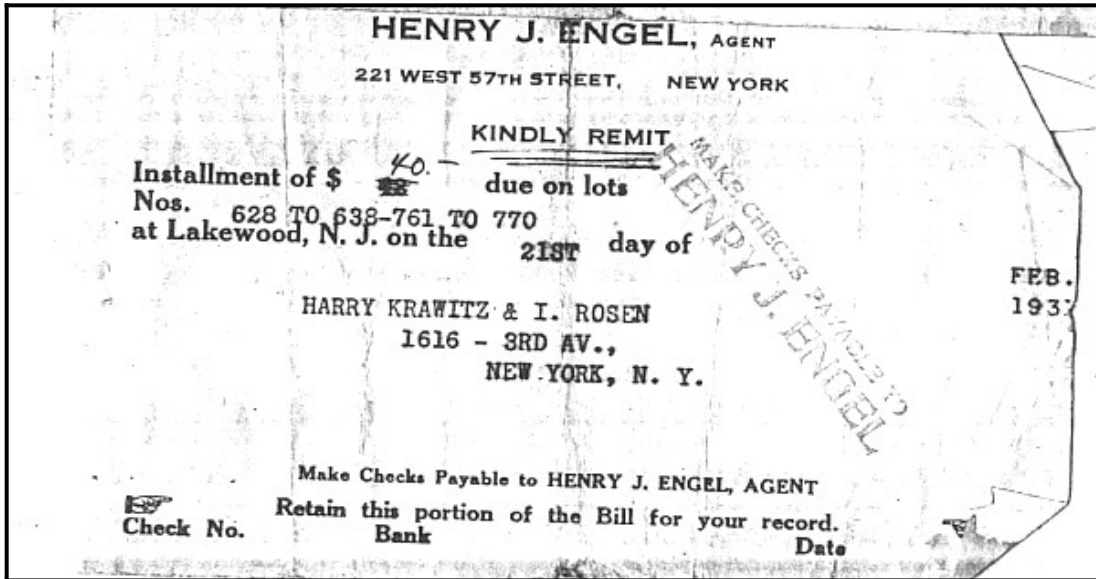
**1927 Tax receipt for real estate speculation**

#### 4.7 PAPA, IZZY, AND REUVEN DRANOV, THE INVESTORS

Papa began the 1920s as the mentor of Mama's brother Izzy. He took Izzy into the butcher shop on Third Avenue, helped him get started, and then gave him the store. By the end of the 1920s Izzy seemed to be plugging away in the store, while Papa was awash in leveraged real estate investments and partnerships that had soured. But it appears that Papa and Izzy had become friends and investment partners. In 1926 they began buying



land at Lakewood, New Jersey. They paid \$40/month installments from 1926 to 1932. There is no record of what happened to the land or whether they ever took sole possession of it. Izzy's store on Third Avenue was the address of record for their partnership. Mama saved the receipts for the tax and mortgage payments on these properties.



**1932 Mortgage payment on Lakewood property**

Papa's uncle, Reuven Dranov, was another of Papa's business associates. He is seen in the 1920's photo with Papa and Izzy. Reuven Dranov was the husband of Papa's aunt



**Papa, Reuven, Izzy (l to r)**

from his mother's side, Chassy Leshner Dranov. She must have been much younger than her sister Brucha Leshner, Papa's mother, since Reuven Dranov and Papa were about the same age. Papa helped Reuven Dranov financially and then involved him in investment schemes. According to Joe, Papa taught Dranov how to earn a living by selling vegetables from a horse drawn wagon. Meanwhile Papa used Dranov's name as a convenient alias to avoid creditors well into the 1930s.

#### **4.8 UNCLE IZZY AND TANTA LENA**

Mama didn't get along with Izzy's wife Lena (she was referred to as Tanta Lena). Mama told me once that Tanta Lena was "crazy". Mama didn't elaborate on just what



constitutes “crazy”, and I thought it was just a casual description. But Izzy’s letters suggest that Mama was accurate, Lena was mentally disturbed.

Izzy wrote a letter to Mama on March 13, 1936 that describes Lena’s mental condition. Martha translated the letter as follows:

“Dear Sister Emma:

....I think only how to please my wife, and no matter what I do it is no good.

I must wash the children’s shirts and clothes for school. Also clean the house...

I will speak with you and let you know when and where I can meet you. For when Lena saw that I was out in the hall Sunday, and that I was talking to you, she stood near the door and when I came into the house she fainted and fell on the floor.

I had a great deal of trouble from her. No one was able to sleep the whole night and the children were not able to go to school the whole week. She does not sleep and is angry with me and says I know you are coming extra so she should get worse.

The other night she wanted to throw herself from the window. I noticed at two in the morning that she was walking about. Then she opened the window and began climbing on it. She climbed on top of the iron bars and was about to fall. I barely caught her in time. She speaks only of killing. She threatens to get a sharp knife and I fear coming home.

She doesn’t want me to come home, but I come in the house.

She lays only in bed and complains and worries. I think you and Morris should not come to see her until she gets better.

Izzy”

Later Lena wrote to Mama and Papa from the Catskills, where Izzy took the family in the hope she would find a cure. As Martha translated:

“Dear Sister and Brother in Law:

We are already in the country enjoying the air. We must only live from the air.....



I don't feel well here. The air is too strong for me. I often feel dizzy especially in the morning. Everyone tells me it will stop. That many people feel this way, but they get used to the air.....Lena”

The situation didn't change for poor Izzy. Nine years later, in 1945, Izzy wrote to Martha:

“I am this summer very sad. I have family trouble that no one should know about and I must bear it and be quiet and must take care of all my children. She should be well, Lena does not feel well this summer..

And my business does not go well. I do not receive meat. This week I did not receive even one piece of meat from the slaughterhouse.....”

I didn't understand why Mama told me that Lena was crazy until I saw these letters. I also can't recall ever seeing my Uncle Izzy or Tanta Lena, even though they lived only a short distance away from us.

#### **4.9 CHASSY DRANOV AND MARY (RISSIN) ISAACSON**

Mama didn't like Chassy Dranov either. Martha remembers that Papa used to take the kids to Chassy's home and Chassy would ply them with a lot of sweets. Mama was furious at both Papa and Chassy when she found out. Mama knew that sweets were not healthy, especially for Papa. Mama never mentioned Chassy to me. I never heard about Chassy Dranov until I began researching this history.

Mama also was troubled by her inability to help her niece Ethel. Ethel was the daughter of Mama's sister Mary, who had come to America in 1912. Sometime in the early 1920s Mary had married a man named Isaacson. Their daughter Ethel was born in about 1924, about the same time as Bernie. When Mary died a few years later, Isaacson remarried. The new wife didn't want Ethel around. Ethel was then placed in the care of social service agencies and sent to a series of foster homes. Mama thought that Ethel was abused in the foster homes and was frustrated that she couldn't do more to help her.

#### **4.10 I WAS BORN JULY, 27, 1932**

I was born about four years after the family returned to Burnett Place. Unlike the others, I was not born at home or at a private hospital, but in Lincoln Hospital, a city hospital. With Papa's properties being repossessed, he couldn't afford a private hospital or to have nurses come to the house to help as he did with the others.

My birth was apparently an accident of fate. Mama told Marge, during her 1959 visit with us, that she had self-aborted several pregnancies after Bernie was born. I don't recall her giving any reason for her letting me live, given the number of mouths she already had to feed in the depth of the depression in 1932, and what the letters have told us about the famine in Russia and the pleading of her parents for dollars to survive.

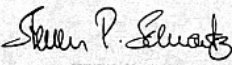



Bertha recalls that Mama's pregnancy with me was a secret from everyone. Mama's naturally stocky appearance was so "normal" that, when I was born, people thought that I was actually Bertha's baby.

Bertha recalls walking from Burnett Place to Lincoln Hospital with Joe, Masha, and Bernie to see the baby. Mama's room was on the ground floor, so they just peeked in. Mama shouted instructions to Bertha through the plate glass window.

Martha recalled that, when Papa drove her and Joe and Bernie to the hospital to see the new baby, she found a paper bag with several bottles in the back seat of the car. When she asked Papa what they were, he said they were schnapps for the brit. I always knew that I had been circumcised, but until I heard this tale I never knew that there was any ceremony associated with the event. As I will tell later, my memory of my earliest years was of a home completely empty of religious rituals, symbols, and holidays. All of that was either left behind in Russia, or erased by the Depression. (Martha told me that Papa had slept on the floor as an act of mourning when he heard that his mother had died. This was long before I was born.)

After Mama came home from the hospital, she was concerned that Bertha, Joe, and Masha had missed going to the beach during July and early August. So she sent them, at ages 14, 12, and 10, by themselves, to Coney Island every day. They went from the Bronx by subway. They changed in the public toilets at the beach. Their only fear was of polio.

THE CITY OF NEW YORK					
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH					
VITAL RECORDS					
CERTIFICATION OF BIRTH					
This is a certification of name and birth facts on file in the Bureau of Vital Records, Department of Health, City of New York.					
DATE OF BIRTH	JULY 27, 1932		CERTIFICATE NO.	10280	
BOROUGH	BRONX	DATE FILED	08-05-32	DATE ISSUED	05-05-97
NAME	LAWRENCE KRAWITZ ***				
SEX	MALE				
MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME	EMMA ROSEN				
FATHER'S NAME	HARRY KRAWITZ				
 STEVEN P. SCHWARTZ CITY REGISTRAR					
Do not accept this transcript unless it bears the raised seal of the Department of Health. The reproduction or alteration of this certification is prohibited by Section 9.21 of the New York City Health Code.					

**My Birth Record**





**August 1932    Mama holding me, with Bernie, Joe, Bertha, Masha, and Ethel (l to r). In the back yard at Burnett Place**



**August 1932    Mama holding me, with Bernie, in the back yard.**

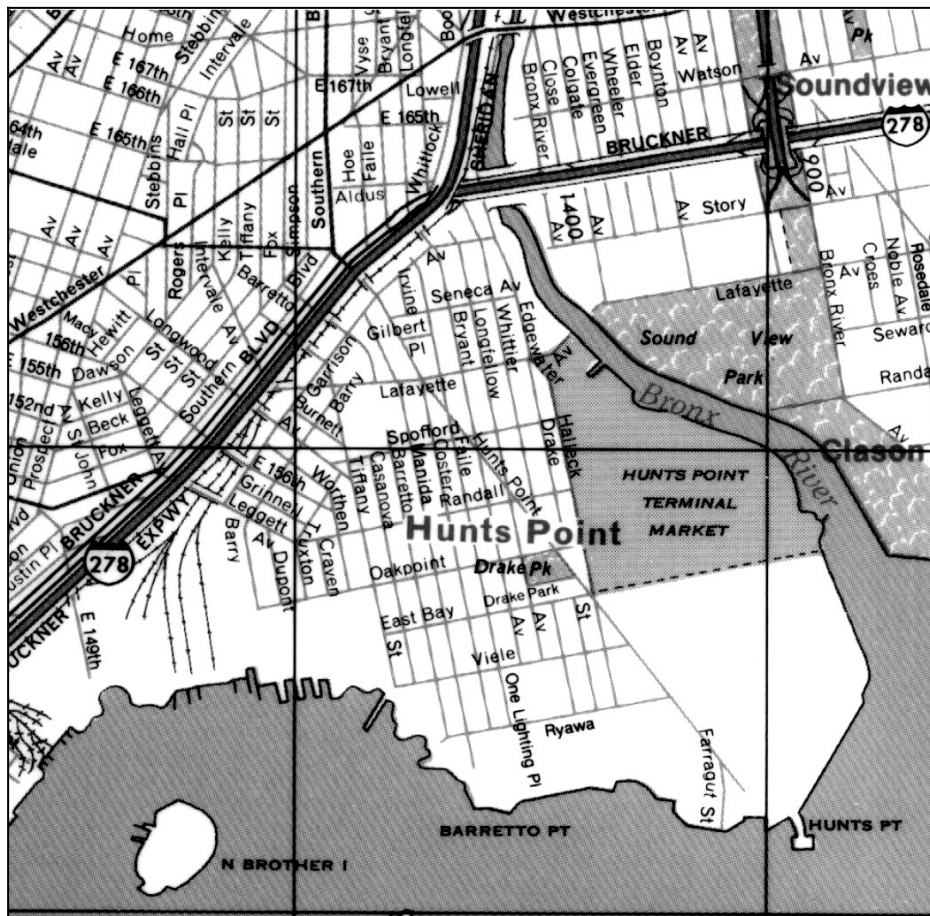


## 5. OUR CHILDHOOD HOME: BURNETT PLACE 1921-1943

One of my surprises in developing this family history was the apparent depth of our family's roots in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx, and Burnett Place in particular.

I found that Hunts Point and Burnett Place are our family's point of reference, just as some British nobility has some castle or manor estate as their ancestral home. From 1920 to 1943, Burnett Place molded our family. Three of us were born there, my father died while we lived there, and we all spent our formative youths there. This section is therefore devoted to a description of Hunts Point and Burnett Place, and the social implications of this location for our family.

### 5.1 THE GEOGRAPHY OF HUNTS POINT



The area covered by the Hunts Point Terminal Market was open fields when I lived in Hunts Point.

As the map shows, the Hunts Point section of the Bronx is a pointed area of land on the south side of the Bronx that sticks out into the East River. The residential area covers a square of about one mile by one mile, and is bounded on three sides by water. The northwest side is bounded by the tracks of the New Haven and Hartford Railroad. These tracks, between Grand Central Station in Manhattan and the towns in Connecticut, lie in a deep culvert that separates Hunts Point from the rest of the Bronx. Hunts Point is



therefore like an island off the shore of the Bronx, connected across the culvert by only a few bridges and otherwise surrounded by water.

The major geological feature of the Hunts Point island is a tall hill at the center of the area. The peak of this hill is at the intersection of Coster Street and Spofford Avenue. From the top of this hill the land slopes gently down to the Bronx River on the northeast and to the East River on the south. The western hillside, down Spofford and Lafayette Avenues to Tiffany Street is precipitously steep. Tiffany Street, at the base of the hill is flat down to the East River.



**P.S. 48 Viewed from Hunts Point Ave.**

Public School 48 sits at the very top of the hill where Spofford Avenue and Coster Street meet (marked by a circle on the map.)

Hunts Point Avenue is a wide cobblestone main street of Hunts Point. The 163rd street trolley line ran across the culvert and down the middle of Hunts Point Avenue, ending at Drake Park.

The Hunts Point subway station on the Pelham Bay line was located across the culvert on the Bronx side of the Hunts Point Avenue bridge where Southern Boulevard intersected 163rd street.

Both sides of Hunts Point Avenue were lined with five story walkup apartments that were set well back from the street by broad concrete sidewalks. These buildings, all built during the 1920s, had storefronts at the street level to provide local shopping for the residents.

Mama and I lived in an apartment building at the intersection of Manida Street and Garrison Avenue after Papa died. I will come back to that place later (it is marked on the map with a circle).

Mama once told me that she had wheeled Bertha in a baby carriage from Burnett Place, along Garrison Avenue, to Hunts Point Avenue. That must have been in 1920-21. She recalled that only grazing cows then populated the land around Manida Street. The area must therefore have been developed later in the 1920s. The Depression of the 1930s permanently stopped all new construction. Between that time and 1996, when I returned to take pictures, there had been no new private construction anywhere in Hunts Point.

The early years of my life were spent in the neighborhood at the foot of the steep Spofford Avenue where Burnett Place intersects with Tiffany Street (this spot is circled on the map.)



## 5.2 THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF BURNETT PLACE: AN INDUSTRIAL ZONE



**Bernie and me at Burnett Place.** Note the open lots, sheds, and abandoned construction sites on the hillside east of Tiffany Street. These lots were my playground.

Looking up the Spofford Avenue hill from Burnett Place I saw only empty lots and tin sheds east of Tiffany Street. I couldn't see the residential and commercial area around Hunts Point Avenue. The picture on the left shows this area.

Farther away I could see a convent on the hillside, with its central building, wide lawns, and white statuary behind its high walls. The hill was so steep that the statuary inside the walls was clearly visible over the walls from the bottom of the hill.

(Every time I look at our Wedgwood dishes I am reminded of the white convent statuary against the green grass background).

Large flat terraces that builders had carved into the hillsides as sites for apartment buildings before the Depression killed all construction scarred the remainder of the hillside. All of this open land became my playground as I grew.

While the hillside to the east of Burnett Place was filled with abandoned construction sites, the low flat area west of Burnett Place was largely "industrial". This area was filled by open lots, corrugated galvanized iron sheds, some small factories, truck garages, junkyards, scrap wood and scrap paper businesses, and the like. Construction companies and trucking companies garaged and maintained their idle equipment in these sheds. A US Gypsum plant belched white dust when it was operating. An ice cream factory and an ice cream cone plant were also located there.

My Burnett Place "neighborhood" sat right between these dilapidated "industrial" settings on the flat land and the open lots of the hillside. Only two small clusters of houses comprised this neighborhood, with no more than 100 residents in total. One cluster of about ten cheap frame houses was located on the south side of Longwood Avenue, a cobblestone street that ran parallel to Burnett Place. The residents of these homes were first generation Italian immigrants and their families.

These immigrants still spoke Italian, grew grapes for their wine, and raised goats for milk and meat. They let the goats roam the streets to forage for food in the open lots and in the garbage. Little kids (like me) liked to grab the goats if we could, and then ride their backs until they bucked us off.



I can't recall ever hearing anything close to an anti-Semitic comment from any of the Italian people in our neighborhood. They sometimes had words for each other, however. I can recall, in school one day, that Matthew Mazzella told Alphonse Milo that "us mountain guineas poop down on you valley guineas". This caused the rest of us to break out laughing. We were all good friends. As I'll tell later, the Irish were very different from the Italians.

### 5.3 BURNETT PLACE

A second cluster of four houses was on Burnett Place, a narrow unpaved gravel covered street. The four story apartment building at 1174 Burnett Place was owned by Papa. That is where we lived when I was born and where I spent most of the first twelve years of my life.

The single frame house on the left is at the corner where Burnett Place butted into Tiffany Street. I always thought it would fall down if it weren't leaning on our house. The Matisse family owned it.

The Mattises had a nice garden in front of their house, garages with a grape arbor in the back, a bocci court on the side of the house for their Italian speaking boarders, and no visible means of employment. They were thought to have been bootleggers in the prohibition. They still grew wine grapes and made their own wine. Their daughter Grace was a sometimes friend of Martha. Their son Dodo, about Joe's age, was I am told just that, a dodo. Their son Charlie was a little older than me, very likable, and a good athlete. Their youngest son was Alfonse, but everyone called him Foonsie. All of the Matisse kids went to PS 48.

The Phillips family, a couple with one daughter about Bernie's age, occupied the third house on the right, across a narrow alley from our apartment building. They rarely ventured out of the house or said hello when they did. I clearly remember that Mrs. Phillips came out of the house with a pitcher of water to help us wash our hands when we came home from Papa's funeral. I knew they were Jewish, but this symbolic act was the only contact I ever saw between our families.



**Our house at 1174 Burnett Place in 1940. The post in the foreground is a fire alarm box.**



When I went back to Hunts Point to take some pictures for this family history, I found an engine rebuilding shop occupying the ground where our apartment building stood. The small frame house on the left is still the old Matisse house. Burnett Place runs in front of the engine shop. The wide street with the double line is Tiffany Street.



**The site of our house on Burnett Place in 1996**



**Looking down Tiffany Street**

The photo looking down Tiffany street toward the East River shows the convent wall in the shadows of the overgrown trees. The white building in the distance is a juvenile detention center that was built in the 1960s directly across from Burnett Place.

The fourth house on Burnett Place, separated from the Philips' house by an empty lot, was a low lying one story frame house. The location of this "Higgins/Farrel house" is on the right hand side of the street in the photo looking down Burnett Place toward the engine shop. Some decrepit sheds are there now. The area still is undeveloped after over fifty years.



**Burnett Place in 1996. The pavement looks as I remembered it. The Higgins/Farrel house was on the right. Our house was behind the parked cars.**

The "Higgins/Farrell house" was the original two-room schoolhouse for the small Italian community before PS 48 was built in the early 20's. The Farrell and Higgins families lived here when I was growing up. Mrs. Farrel was the sister of Mr. Higgins. They let their crippled father grovel in filth in his basement room. Since the grandfather's basement room was at the same level as the backyard, I saw his filthy condition, his whiskey bottles, and the coal fired potbelly stove for his heat.



The two Higgins/Farrel husbands were drunkards. Higgins worked on a Department of Sanitation trash truck. Farrell was a mechanic for the American Bank Note Company, four blocks away. Every Friday night they met in a bar, got drunk on their paychecks, and staggered home down Tiffany Street. The Farrels had a son a year older than me (Billy) and an older daughter, Eileen. The Higgins had a son my age (Tommy) and two younger kids. All of these children went to the St. Anthanasius Catholic School on the other side of the culvert across the Tiffany Street bridge. Both families dressed in their finest on Sunday morning and walked single file up Tiffany Street to St. Anthanasius Church. The crippled grandfather stayed behind in his filthy room.

The Higgins and Farrells contributed to my earliest sense of Jewish identity. They frequently referred to me as a hyphenated Jew-something.....Jew-mockey is the one that comes to mind. When they went to Mr. Resnick's grocery store, a couple of blocks away on Spofford Avenue at Casanova Street, (Mr. Resnick was an elderly man with a limp, who could add numbers written on a manila bag faster than a modern computer.) they didn't say they were going to the grocery store. They said that they were going "to the Jew." And they were frequently sent there to get "Jew-bread" (known to me as rye bread).

Whether this was true anti-Semitism or just the language of their parents or their school, which they told me taught them that the Jews had killed their Christ, I didn't know. All this happened before I was nine or ten. Since these were the only kids I had to play with, I adjusted to them and made the best of it. The alternative was to get beaten up, which sometimes happened anyway when Billy, who was bigger than me, got mad at something.

I learned about the difference between the Irish and Italians very early in life.

#### **5.4 OUR APARTMENT BUILDING: 1174 BURNETT PLACE**

Papa's apartment building had two apartments on each floor. The apartments ran from the front to the back, with one apartment on the right side of the building and one on the left. A stair well with a polished wood banister ran up the center of the building in line with the front entrance.

Each apartment had three rooms. The door from the stairwell landing led into the kitchen at the back of the building. The kitchen window looked out through a fire escape over the back yard toward Longwood Avenue and, about a mile away, the American Gypsum plant. Beyond the yard was Clemente's two story galvanized iron construction equipment shed. This shed backed onto our yard and faced out onto Longwood Avenue.

The bathroom was off the kitchen. It held a tub and a toilet, but no sink. We washed our hands in the kitchen sink. The kitchen connected directly to a middle room that connected to a front room through a pair of French doors. We used the middle room as a living room and the front room as a bedroom. Since Papa was the landlord, he joined two



apartments at the front rooms to create an apartment with four bedrooms for us on the third floor.

Bertha remembers a DeSalvo family that lived on the top floor. They had two red-haired daughters whose play with Bertha was frequently interrupted by their need to go to Confession. One day, in a disagreement, one of the girls told the other to “tear the dirty Jew’s hair out of her head.”

She also recalls a Cartonuto family with ten children that lived on the second floor. The odor of their cooking was so intense throughout the building that Bertha still becomes nauseous whenever she revisits the smell of Italian food.

I recall the Buckleys, a couple that occupied the first floor apartment. They were both very obese. I think the husband, Charley, was a truck driver. The wife sat looking out of her first floor window all day. She never seemed to move or talk.

The building was set back from the slate block sidewalk by a narrow moat. The front stoop arched over this moat to connect the sidewalk with the raised building entrance. Stairs leading to the basement went down behind the trashcans into the moat to the basement door directly under the stoop.

The basement contained the coal-fired boiler on the right side and an apartment on the left side. The boiler side held a large coal bin (we always ordered pea coal) and a small shop area that was reserved for Papa and Joe, although I used to sneak in there when I could, just to poke around. The basement apartment had a large window and a door providing ground level access to a brick patio in the back yard. Papa created this apartment when I was born. The ground level access let Mama take me into the back yard. (One of the pictures shows Mama holding me in the back yard). Before Papa died he had a painter employee living here, a guy with a massive lump on his head that he said was from a piece of shrapnel that was still in there since WW I.

## **5.5 THE STREETS AND LOTS AS PLAYGROUNDS**

On the north side of Burnett Place, across from our house was a large empty lot filled with ragweed. Down the block across Burnett Place at Barry Street was a commercial baking plant, Your Baking Company. This plant had a fleet of trucks to deliver baked goods around the Bronx. Bertha recalls that, before the baking plant was built, teams came to play baseball on this lot every Sunday. Our family watched these games from the upstairs windows. Large crowds watched the game from the edge of the triangular lot.

The father of one of my first grade classmates at PS 48 worked as a truck mechanic at the baking plant. I sometimes noticed him walking past our house to his job, always in spotlessly clean pressed mechanics coveralls and shined shoes. Once I must have said hello and noticed his accent. My friend also always came to school with perfectly pressed shirt and short pants, perfect knee socks, shined shoes, combed hair, and a school bag for his books. This was a lot neater than the way the rest of us looked. Many years later I



concluded that the parents of my friend Jerry Newman must have been a Yekkie (German immigrants).

The steep Spofford Avenue hill began its climb at Tiffany Street, a block away from Burnett Place. Butwin's candy store was at the foot of the hill. Resnick's grocery was one block up this hill at Casanova Street. We had to climb the hill to get to PS 48 on the top. But we enjoyed sleigh riding down the Spofford Avenue hill in the winter.

Bertha recalls when horse drawn wagons were used for delivery. When the Spofford Avenue hill became icy, she could hear the horses screaming as both horse and wagon slid down the icy hill. She also remembers when Mr. Resnick sold milk from a large milk can by ladling the milk into the customer's aluminum container.

Few people owned cars in the years before WW II, so the streets were open for play. A popular street game was stickball. This was played with a broom handle as a bat, and a pink rubber ball called a "spaldeen" (many years later I recognized that this was really a "Spalding", and the pink rubber ball was the base of a tennis ball before the fuzz was attached). The street was the ball field, and manhole covers were the bases. A popular place for the "big guys" to play stickball was at the base of the Spofford Avenue hill where the triangular intersection of Longwood Avenue, and Spofford Avenue, and Tiffany Street created a wide street.

The "big guys" were mostly boys of Joe's and maybe Bernie's ages from the Italian families on Longwood Avenue. They could hit the ball very far by my senses, but, since the outfield was on the steep Spofford Avenue hillside, any balls hit through the infielders didn't roll far up the hill, and, since the outfielders were also up on the hillside, it was hard to hit the ball over their heads. I remember these guys running the bases with coins jangling in their pockets. That sound led me to think that "big guys" always had money. Every once in a while the game had to be halted when a truck would come by.

Bertha recalls that Bernie was hit over his eye while standing behind a batter in one of those games. She had to take him to a drug store two blocks "up the hill" at Barretto Street for emergency care.

I never played stickball where the "big guys" played. I was too small. When Charlie Matisse had a spaldeen (he was the only one on our block who seemed to have the money for one) we played on Tiffany Street near Burnett Place. We spent a lot of the time looking for the ball in the tall ragweed that sometimes was over our heads. We never had a problem getting stickball bats. The local squad car from the 41st precinct used to come to Burnett Place "to take their breaks." They usually had some bats that they had confiscated from kids elsewhere. Since there were no windows to be broken on the empty lots where we lived, they gave us the bats.

## **5.6 THE REAL BRONX ACROSS THE CULVERT**



There was no public transportation from Burnett Place. We walked to get anywhere. To get to the subway we walked over the culvert on the Longwood Avenue bridge to the Longwood Avenue subway station. It was a six block walk for us.

Only a limited range of goods was sold in Hunts Point-groceries, candy, drugstore items, and paint. For anything else, we had to go across the culvert. The first street on the other side of the culvert was Whitlock Avenue, later renamed Bruckner Boulevard. This was a dual lane roadway, divided by a grassy strip containing spaced trees (like Wooten Parkway). I think WPA must have built it in the early thirties. (A car that jumped the median while he waited on the median to cross this street at the Hunts Point intersection killed Pincus Spielman, Si's father,) Since the Whitlock Avenue right of way was contiguous and parallel with the culvert, there were houses only on the side of the street away from the culvert. We briefly lived in one of these houses, 981 Whitlock Avenue, near the intersection with Hunts Point Avenue.( The elevated I-278, Bruckner Boulevard, that now runs on top of Whitlock Avenue was built much later.)

The second street parallel to the culvert was Southern Boulevard, a wide cobblestone main thoroughfare with a trolley line running down its middle and the Pelham Bay subway line underneath. The local branch of the Public Library was located at the intersection of Tiffany Street and Southern Boulevard. Bertha took me and Bernie to see President Roosevelt travel down Southern Boulevard in an open car on his way from Hyde Park to open the Triborough Bridge. I recall seeing him pass, and wave to the crowd, while I watched from somewhere near the intersection of Southern Boulevard and Longwood Avenue.



**Southern Blvd. in 1942 From our apartment on Whitlock Ave. Note the trolley car in the lower left.**

North of its intersection with Hunts Point Avenue, Southern Boulevard had three movie theaters, a dance hall, a bowling alley, and stores of all kinds. You could buy anything here. (I took the picture from the back window of our apartment on Whitlock Avenue. I'll come to this later.)

The map on page 3 shows the street beyond Southern Boulevard as Fox Street. St. Anthanasius Church and the Catholic School attended by the Farrel/Higgins family were at the corner of Fox

Street and Tiffany Street. Along that same block on Fox Street, near the corner of Fox Street and 163rd Street, was a Yeshiva. More on that Yeshiva later.

## **5.7 THE JEWISH DIMENSION OF HUNTS POINT AND BURNETT PLACE**



This picture of Hunts Point is incomplete without describing its religious dimension. There was no Catholic church in Hunts Point. The Italians were big on statuary, crèches, crucifixes, and mourning black clothes. They weren't, however, very ardent churchgoers. They didn't go across the culvert to St. Anthanasius because that was an "Irish" Catholic church. Their kids went to PS 48. There was one Protestant church in Hunts Point, across the street from PS 48. I never saw anyone go in. It always looked closed. My friends who lived close to the church also said that "no one" goes in there. There was a minister, however, who once spoke at PS 48, so there must have been a congregation to support him.



#### **The building of Temple Beth Elohim**

separating the lawn from the sidewalk. The lower windows were also stained glass. The 1996 photograph shows the "Temple", now a Baptist Church, behind a chain link fence topped with concertina wire. That's not a good sign.

There were two synagogues located across the street from each other on Faile Street, about a block away from PS 48 on the other side of Hunts Point Avenue from Burnett Place. (the location is shown on the map as a circle).

One synagogue was in a former mansion, set back behind a wide, open lawn. This building had been converted into Temple Beth Elohim (the Temple). The Temple had mixed seating. When I knew it as a synagogue there was only a low and decorative iron picket fence

The other synagogue was an ugly cubical brick structure that had been built by people who wouldn't put their foot into the temple. It must have had a name, but no one knew it. Everyone called it the "little shul." It was almost directly across the street from the Temple.

There was also a Sholem Aleichem Folk Shul that taught Yiddish without religion in a converted ground floor apartment on Hunts Point Avenue. Bertha and Martha attended this Yiddish school when they were young because Mama wanted them to be able to read the letters from Europe.

None of this Jewish life along Hunts Point Avenue was perceptible to me from down the other side of the hill at Burnett Place where we lived.

Jewish life was even more intense outside of Hunts Point on the Bronx side of the culvert, where there were storefront shuls and kosher butchers, and numerous large ornate



synagogues on the classic European style. This life was even more distant for me when I was little.

The isolated Burnett Place universe was, with the exception of about a year, where I was born and lived until I was eleven years old.

## 5.8 THE SOCIAL DIMENSION IN RETROSPECT

I don't know why my parents chose the remote and isolated Burnett Place/Longwood Avenue/Tiffany Street section of New York City to live and raise their family. Having made that choice of location, they made no effort to affiliate themselves and their children with the closest Jewish community that was available. It would appear that they chose Burnett Place because it offered the greatest barriers, to any participation by themselves or their children in any social or Jewish life. Then they successfully hid their family behind those barriers. There may have been other reasons, but the effect was the same.



**874 Manida Street. We lived on the fourth floor. It had no elevator.**

I realized how isolated Burnett Place was after we moved to Manida Street. I was older and my life was changing, but life on Manida Street was clearly in the mainstream Hunts Point community where most of the people were Jewish and I didn't have to play with anyone who called me names. I still enjoyed the isolated island nature of Hunts Point and its small town feel. I knew all of the stores, and all the kids my age went to the same school. Most of the Jewish kids went to one of two Hebrew schools. We all played in the same playground in the day and congregated at the playground on summer nights to discuss the latest sports news. If we were really bored we walked on Southern Boulevard to see the well lit stores and movie arcades, and then returned back across the bridge to the haven of Hunts Point.

Mama also saw the advantages of Manida Street life. She joined the sisterhoods of the Sholem Aleichem Folk Shul and the Temple, and went to conferences where she saw important people like Eleanor Roosevelt speak out in support of Israel. She even met some men, and could walk over to Hunts Point Avenue to get a Yiddish paper.

We would have enjoyed none of this social contact from down the hill at Burnett Place. At Manida Street we were close to the center of the community. Mama and I both became involved. We were still geographically within Hunts Point, but socially we were very far from Burnett Place.



## **6. MY FIRST EIGHT YEARS: 1932-1940**

My first eight years began in 1932 with my birth. They ended in 1940 with two events that significantly shaped my life. These two events were the coming of two additional characters on the family stage, Si Spielman and Meir Ostrinsky.

Bertha was 14 and Martha 10 when I was born in Lincoln Hospital on July 27, 1932. They both claimed to have pushed me in my carriage and to be taken for my mother.

### **6.1 MY PRESCHOOL LIFE AT BURNETT PLACE**

My preschool play area was limited to the backyards of our Burnett Place house and those of our neighboring houses. We had a vegetable garden in our back yard. Behind the garden were old wooden sheds that tipped to one side due to their rotting walls. Inside, their damp dirt floors held old plumbing tools and pipes that Papa had abandoned to rust after he completed the central heating of the building. Behind the musty smelling sheds, a two-foot space separated them from the galvanized iron wall of the next property. This space was filled with scrap lumber and other refuse. It was my secret way to get out of our yard. It led behind the Phillips yard, and over to the Farley/Higgins' yard. This space was also the place I went to relieve myself when playing outside. It was too far to go upstairs.

### **6.2 THE FAMILY**

#### **6.2.1 Mama**

However my day in the street with the kids went, Mama's kitchen was always my safe and pleasant haven with its smell of good food cooking. Mama used pots as big as Papa's five-gallon paint cans in order to cook the volume of food consumed by our family. Coming into the kitchen after being outside on a Sunday, when Mama was cooking for everyone, I always was struck by the aroma of hot chicken soup and immediately looked on the stove to see what I could take to nosh.

The kitchen was usually filled with the sound of the Yiddish radio station, WEVD, blaring out an episode of Mama's favorite Yiddish serial "Tsoures Beiliten" (People's Troubles). This Yiddish tearjerker usually had Mama in tears. When I teased her about this program she responded: "Sometimes I need a good cry". It was the middle of the Depression. I didn't know about Papa's troubles, Izzy's crazy wife, Ethel's problems, or the depressing letters from Russia. I didn't begin to understand what she meant.

I liked the way Mama made rice pudding with raisins, and cakes with cinnamon and raisins. She made the cake dough in a large pot, let it rise until it flowed over the edge of the pot, then kneaded it with her fists, tore it into balls, and rolled a sheet from each ball with a rolling pin on a large flat piece of wood. Then she sprinkled the raisins and cinnamon on the sheet and rolled it up. I liked to help her with this. I also liked to steal some "grivens" from the frying pan when she rendered the skin from a soup chicken.



Grivens were the pieces of browned chicken skin that remained after the fat had melted off. I liked to chew on these rubbery grivens. She always let me have a couple with the admonition that they weren't healthy.

Mama also had some superstitions that I teased her about. She wouldn't sew a button on a garment while I was wearing it because "You would forget everything you knew". If we were walking on the busy sidewalk of Southern Boulevard she held my hand so no one walking the other way could pass between us, because that would mean: "someone would come between us." She also believed that the size of my fist was related to the size of my foot. When she bought socks for me she asked me to hold out my fist. She then wrapped the sock around my fist, heel to toe. If the sock length exceeded the length around my fist, then the sock was the right size. If I said I was feeling good, or feeling better, she would say "kain eine hawra", which is Yiddish for "no evil eye". I teased her about all of these things, and about tsoures beileiten, and she accepted the teasing with laughter. We had an easy relationship.

Mama had all kinds of cures for everything. If I had a stopped up nose, she gave me a salt-water solution to inhale through my nostrils. This worked, but I gagged if any went down my throat. She also used salt water for eye problems or a sore throat gargle. Her favorite concoction was a "gogomogo." This was hot milk with honey and a raw egg mixed together. I didn't mind drinking this, except for the sensation of the egg white running down my throat in an endless string. Cod liver oil was another of her ways to ward off all illness in the winter. I took a spoonful every night. For a prolonged fever or a bellyache, she gave me an enema, "to wash out the poison." I don't recall ever going to see a doctor.

I recall the day Mama took me to be vaccinated. We took the Hunts Point trolley down 163rd street. It was a warm spring day and the trolley windows had been removed and replaced with floor- to- roof grilles so that we were riding in a stream of fresh air. At the end of this ride we walked to a park where kids were lined up waiting for what must have been a Public Health nurse to give them their vaccinations. Seeing all the other kids gave me confidence. It was a nice day to be in the park with Mama.

Mama and I took the same trolley on our rare visits to Papa's butcher store on Eighth Avenue. I recall only one such visit. Mama used to quote back to me something I said on one visit that she thought was both cute and memorable. I don't remember the occasion. The quote is "Mama, why do you go to Papa's store? He always hollers at you."

Mama also was the family mouse trapper. We used spring-loaded traps that either smashed the mouse or just caught it by the tail. In either case Mama took the mouse by the tail, opened the furnace door and threw the mouse into the red coals. I recall watching to see the mouse jump over the hot coals a couple of times before it disappeared. Mama then clanged the furnace door closed with an emphatic "feh!"

### 6.2.2 Papa



Papa didn't pay much attention to me. His name for me was "Tchutch." He suffered from diabetes as long as I can remember. This required him to take urine samples and test them with a solution that turned color when there was too much sugar. Then he injected some amount of insulin into his arm. By the time I was seven or eight he sometimes asked me to help him inject the insulin. My job was to bunch the skin on his forearm with one hand and wipe the spot with an alcohol saturated gauze pad with the other hand. He used his two hands to inject the insulin into the bunched skin where I had wiped. I didn't mind helping him and was pleased that he would ask me. This was our "quality" time together.

Papa always had a car, but only three trips stick in my memory. One was from Coney Island. We rented a house on the main street about a block from the beach. It had a first floor porch that looked out over the street. The ride home was long and hot and I was glad that it was over. The second trip was to Orchard Park Beach. Papa had some car trouble. While we were at the beach, he was off getting it repaired. The third trip was to see Joe on one of his encampments. I think it was at Grassy Sprain Reservoir. I remember seeing his tent and thinking that camping was neat and exciting. On the way home we drove through some neighborhood in Westchester County that had tall trees and private homes. I was impressed by one home in what we call Tudor Style, with the wooden rafters showing through the stucco in front. I made up my mind that someday I would have a home like that.

One night Papa brought home a big live fish and let it swim in our bathtub before he killed it by smashing its head against the side of the tub. When Mama made gefilte fish from this fish she saved the head. I thought it was blech (gross) when I opened the icebox door and saw this fishhead looking back at me. She said that Papa enjoyed the Russian delicacy of sucking out its eyes.

Papa had an aunt in New York, about his own age, by the name of Chassy Dranov. Her husband was Reuven Dranov. Martha remembered that Papa took her with Joe to visit Chassy. On these visits Chassy would ply the kids with sweets. They never told Mama because they knew that Mama didn't think sweets were good for them, especially not for Papa.

Reuven Dranov, was a ner do well who Papa tried to help find work. I never met either Chassy or Reuven. The closest I ever came to Reuven Dranov was being shown his horse and wagon, and being told he was a peddler. Nevertheless, Papa used his name as an alias when I was little. We had a party line telephone in our apartment. It didn't have a dial. You lifted the phone and gave the operator the number, and hoped that no one on the line was listening. When I was home alone I answered the phone. After several calls asking for Reuven Dranov I asked Mama why people thought that Reuven Dranov lived with us. She told me that sometimes Papa used his name for business. At some point I figured out that the callers were creditors trying to catch up with Papa. When they asked when he would be home, I told them I didn't know. That was usually the truth



### 6.2.3 Bertha

Bertha paid a lot of attention to me. But I wasn't aware of her arthritis condition. She tells of having arthritis attacks while at James Monroe High School (1934-1935) and reporting to the nurses' room for relief. The volunteer workers who saw her condition referred her to a "Park Avenue" physician, Dr. Bick. Since she couldn't pay him, he agreed to treat her for only the cost of the "gold salt" injections that he prescribed. He continued to treat her without payment until he went into the Army during WW II.

Bertha walked me to the public library at Southern Boulevard and Tiffany Street for the librarian's story hour. The kids sat quietly in a circle in a small room on the second floor. The library interior was filled with ornate wooden cabinets and shaped mahogany railings. The atmosphere was very hush hush. I knew I had to be quiet.

Bertha also tried to read Pinocchio to me. I recall making her stop when I became too frightened over what would happen to Pinocchio. Bertha also remembers that she had to stop reading the story. I recently remembered this fear when I watched a videotape of Pinocchio with Ayelet ( she was about 5). To my amazement and pleasant surprise, Ayelet displayed none of my old fear.

I remember being puzzled by Bertha's college projects for kindergarten teaching. Some projects consisted of large sheets of green paper with a lot of little sticks glued to them. Others had holes and colored cellophane over the holes to make it look like windows. Uncle Morris, on one of his visits, made a big fuss about one of these projects, and everyone thought he was a genius for figuring out some way to make the project better. I was just in kindergarten, but I thought what he did was trivial. Bertha was in college and did things that the others did not do.

### 6.2.4 Joe

I don't recall having much to do with Joe in my early years. He was like Papa, just "there." I do recall knowing about his reputation for wandering away from home. On one of these wanderings, according to a story that I heard several times, he went aboard a ship tied up at the Tiffany Street pier and was "about to set sail" when Mama showed up and hauled him home. (Joe told me that he often went to the pier when he played hooky.)

The year I was born, Mama enrolled Joe in a one room Hebrew school, where one "Rabbi" taught all of the students, regardless of level. The so-called school was in an apartment on Spofford Avenue near PS 48. When Joe described this place I realized it was the same place Mama sent me about nine years later. (Joe is the only one in the family besides me who attended any Hebrew School. I lasted in this school about a week.)

Joe also had a Bar Mitzvah in 1933. Joe described the synagogue to me as a place on Prospect Avenue where Mama had "some contact." This was probably Congregation Bikur Cholim, the same synagogue where Papa took me once, and where Mama went to



get a rabbi for the unveiling of Papa's stone. Joe recalled that the highlight of his Bar Mitzvah was that afterward he got his own room.

Joe never mentioned having given a speech (in either English or Yiddish) or singing the Maftir. But the letters from Russia clearly are responses to reports that Joe both gave a speech and sang Maftir. (Personally, I can't believe that that Hebrew school could prepare anyone to do either. ) Neither Martha nor Bertha recalled attending Joe's Bar Mitzvah. Thus the event may have involved just Mama and Joe.

Joe had a good relationship with his sisters when they all were in grade school. He told me that the three of them went to the library together and raced to see who could fill up a library card the quickest. Joe's reading interest centered on American Indians. But Joe had problems, he said, with his sisters when they started Junior High. He said that Bertha didn't talk to him for four years once she started Junior High School. And Martha didn't talk to him because she had a girl friend next door (Dolly Mattisse).

By the time I was four or five, Joe was already in the Boy Scouts. He went camping and had a lot of interesting scouting stuff in a trunk that I liked to peek into. Joe was also an artist who drew a sketch of me that was published in his high school year book.



**Joe's sketch of me sleeping..April 1938**

I remember Mama telling Joe that he was talented. She felt that the time he was wasting with the Boy Scouts he should be using to develop his talents, improve his academics, or earn money.

6.2.5 Masha



Masha wanted to be a nurse and thought she had medical insights. For practice, she once tried to train my ears to lie flat against my head using medical adhesive tape. I inherited Papa's ears and was cursed by Walt Disney's production of Dumbo, the flying elephant, while I was a child. Unfortunately for me, she put the tape over the hair behind my ears. She was less concerned about my pain when she removed the tape than about her failed experiment. My ears just sprang out to their original shapes. On another occasion she tried to give me a physiology lesson. We were having a noon meal of hot chicken soup in the kitchen on a very hot day. I was sitting next to the open window. I recall Masha telling me that if I ate the soup I would become hotter than the air around me. Then the air would feel cooler and I would be more comfortable. The message was: eat the soup. I remember not believing her.

#### 6.2.6 Bernie

Bernie was already in seventh grade when I entered PS 48. I don't remember ever walking to school with him.

Bernie missed a lot of school due to a foot irritation that was diagnosed as athlete's foot, although he wasn't an athlete. The cure required soaking his feet in potassium permanganate solution. I remember him soaking his feet in this purple stuff, and then wearing white socks to avoid irritating his feet with the dye. He wore white socks the rest of his life.

When Bernie was absent from school, as he frequently was, Mama designated me to bring the excuse slip, signed by Mama, to his teacher. I also had to ask the teacher for his homework assignment so that he wouldn't fall behind. One of these missions was specially memorable.

I entered his classroom, saw his teacher on the other side of the room, and started directly toward her to deliver my messages from Mama. I didn't pay any attention to some students unrolling a large sheet of manila paper on the floor in front of the door, although I saw them. When I arrived in front of the teacher, Miss Shea, a real Irish battle-ax, she was screaming at me for walking right across the manila paper. I looked back and saw my black footprints right across the paper. I was so flustered that I ran out without asking for the homework. Later, I told Mama that there were no assignments.

Bernie graduated from PS 48 in 1939. He then went on to Food Trades Vocational High School. I recall some heated discussion between him and Mama and Papa about what course of study he should choose. Mama and Papa thought he should learn a skilled trade like butcher or baker. Bernie wanted to study grocering. I was like the fly on the wall overhearing these and other discussions around the house. Bernie confided in me that he wanted to sign up for the grocery course because it was less competitive.

From my vantage point as a fly on the wall, I had the impression that there was a pecking order in the house and that Bernie was on the bottom. Bertha was in college and Mama



kept her on some kind of pedestal. Joe was talented but he and Masha were supposed to get jobs. Bernie was in a different situation. He was less capable and needed support.

This impression was reinforced by a story about Bernie that I heard a couple of times from people in the family. There was a fire alarm box in front of the Matisse's house on the corner of Burnett Place and Tiffany Street. The alarm box was built into the top of a red cast iron pipe stand, about a foot in diameter and six feet tall. Fire engines responded when the handle on the front of the box was pulled down. This was standard in New York before telephones and 911. According to the story, some bigger kids were playing near the corner when they had an idea. They held little Bernie up so he could pull the handle. After he pulled the handle, all of the big kids ran home. Only Bernie stayed near the alarm to be captured when the firemen responded to the false alarm. I know this story only because other people retold it, and in a sort of mocking way. I never asked Bernie if it was true. I felt sorry for him that his choice of a high school curriculum was based on his low opinion of his own ability, a low opinion I think the family reinforced.

Bernie showed me his homework assignments from high school. Some of them consisted of devising schemes for stacking cans at the ends of the aisles. The objective was to make it appear that previous customers had already disturbed the stack of cans. The lesson was that customers will not take a can from a stack if they think they will be the first to destroy the perfect stack. A perfect stack was not an inviting stack. Even at my age, I couldn't believe that this had to be taught in a school.

#### 6.2.7 Ethel

Ethel Isaccson was the daughter of Mama's deceased sister Mary. Mama was always concerned about her niece, but could do little to help her. Ethel's stepmother didn't want her. Mama didn't have the financial resources to provide an approved foster home. Thus Ethel bounced around the foster home network. I can recall only two visits of Ethel. She appears in the picture of me as an infant in Mama's arms in August 1932.



### 6.3 PUBLIC SCHOOL 48

Mama registered me for kindergarten at PS 48 in January 1937, when I was four and a half years old, to get me out of the house. The school must have later discovered that I was under age, because I spent a year and a half in kindergarten. PS 48 had two first grade classes that started six months apart. I started first grade in the September 1938 class.

Bertha was attending Hunter College to be a teacher when I started school. I became her teaching project. I must have been a successful project because I recall being able to read before most of the kids in my early classes. She also taught me to write my name. There were certain conventions to be settled. Was it Laurence with a U or Lawrence with a W? Was it Krawitz with a W or Kravitz with a V?

She favored Laurence with a U and Kravitz with a V. My teachers converted me to Lawrence with a W, but let me keep Kravitz with a V. I had to change my name legally in 1954 to accommodate Kravitz with a V. Bertha started all this confusion. (I concluded that Bertha changed her name to Kravitz because it was easier for the boys to say than KRAWITZ. Seventeen years later, Joe wanted to change his name too...but didn't want to get too far from mine. He asked me why I didn't change mine to something reasonable, like Smith.)



**Larry...age 4**





**Larry at 5**

In January of 1939 I was given an advanced placement test and, instead of going into the second semester of first grade, I was “skipped” into second grade. I suspect that this had something to do with class size balancing and my July 27th birth date being close to a dividing point in age. This skipping meant that some years later I graduated from high school in January, lost the spring semester of playing high school basketball, and had the spring semester of idle time before I could start college in September.

I was frequently late to school in the early grades. The six block climb up the steep Spofford Avenue hill. was tough going for a skinny little first grader who left little time to spare. Sometimes I took an interesting short cut through some of the empty lots. The house was so hectic in the mornings with all of

the others rushing off to their schools that I was on my own to get out of the house on time. Sometimes I didn’t leave enough time. I could always tell whether I was going to be late to school as soon as I reached the top of the hill, about a block away from the school. If I saw kids still lined up outside the Coster Street entrance, I was probably on time. If there was no one outside, I was late. After being late a few times I learned that the penalty for being late was suffering ridicule by the teacher in front of the class. I soon decided that if I was late again I would just play hooky.

I can’t recall how I spent my time on most of these hooky days, or how I handled the excuse note that usually was required. I do remember one time in particular when I played hooky and spent my time climbing some of the trees in the empty lot behind an abandoned truck storage lot across Tiffany Street from our house. This time I fell out of the tree and badly cut my ear. When I got home and showed Mama the cut, I told her that I had been bitten while petting a dog that lived in a small house that abutted the convent wall. Mama dragged me to Lincoln Hospital where a doctor applied some treatment that was extremely painful. Mama also called the police who confined the dog for observation to assure it didn’t have rabies.

PS 48 was a very disciplined place. My teachers were, for the most part, tough Irish spinsters. You didn’t wander the halls without a pass. Classes lined up and marched through the halls silently in single file. If a class ever had to go to the gym or the schoolyard, it always lined up and marched out silently in a single file.

#### **6.4 PAPA’S BUSINESSES IN THE DEPRESSION**

Mama never talked to me about money, or how little of it we had during the Depression. She always tried to shield me from the bad news.



Papa's Eighth Avenue butcher shop went bankrupt in 1936. Evidence of the bankruptcy is the stack of "rubber" checks that were written to Papa by his partner in the butcher shop. The checks are dated between June and September of 1936. They were worthless due to "insufficient funds".

FORM A-S. W. & B. CORP. N. Y.

**RETURNED UNPAID**  
Reason checked if known

NEW YORK 8/29 1936 No. 1-773  
**THE DUNBAR NATIONAL BANK**  
OF NEW YORK  
2298 SEVENTH AVENUE AT 135TH STREET - 2824 EIGHTH AVENUE AT 150TH STREET

*Krametz* \$19  $\frac{31}{4}$

FORM A-S. W. & B. CORP. N. Y.

**RETURNED UNPAID**  
Reason checked if known

NEW YORK 8/29 1936 No. 1-773  
**THE DUNBAR NATIONAL BANK**  
OF NEW YORK  
2298 SEVENTH AVENUE AT 135TH STREET - 2824 EIGHTH AVENUE AT 150TH STREET

*Krametz* \$46  $\frac{27}{4}$

FORM A-S. W. & B. CORP. N. Y.

**RETURNED UNPAID**  
Reason checked if known

NEW YORK 8/29 1936 No. 1-773  
**THE DUNBAR NATIONAL BANK**  
OF NEW YORK  
2298 SEVENTH AVENUE AT 135TH STREET - 2824 EIGHTH AVENUE AT 150TH STREET

*Krametz* \$50  $\frac{12}{4}$

FORM A-S. W. & B. CORP. N. Y.

**RETURNED UNPAID**  
Reason checked, if known

NEW YORK 8/28 1936 No. 1-773  
**THE DUNBAR NATIONAL BANK**  
OF NEW YORK  
2298 SEVENTH AVENUE AT 135TH STREET - 2824 EIGHTH AVENUE AT 150TH STREET

*Krametz* \$56  $\frac{47}{4}$

FORM A-S. W. & B. CORP. N. Y.

**RETURNED UNPAID**  
Reason checked if known

NEW YORK 8/26 1936 No. 1-773  
**THE DUNBAR NATIONAL BANK**  
OF NEW YORK  
2298 SEVENTH AVENUE AT 135TH STREET - 2824 EIGHTH AVENUE AT 150TH STREET

*Krametz* \$25  $\frac{92}{4}$

NEW YORK 8/20 1936 No. 1-773  
**THE DUNBAR NATIONAL BANK**  
OF NEW YORK  
2298 SEVENTH AVENUE AT 135TH STREET - 2824 EIGHTH AVENUE AT 150TH STREET

*Palman* *Colodny & Krametz* \$30  $\frac{82}{4}$   
DOLLARS  
*Colodny*

Checks to Papa written against an empty account. Papa's partner, Colodny, signed the checks. (\$20 in 1936 is the equivalent of about \$400 in 2000, due to inflation.)



Mama saved these worthless checks. She told me that Papa trusted his partners too much, and they always cheated him. These checks seem like supporting evidence for her claim. Joe said that once the store failed, Papa became very sad and depressed.

Papa took a summer job as shochet at a hotel in the Catskills after the butcher shop went bankrupt. Mama took me by bus to see him that summer. We didn't spend much time with him. The moment I remember was behind a hotel. He was in a butcher's apron, standing over a large garbage can. He had just sliced the head off of a live chicken and let the head fall into the can.

Later that year Papa tried to earn money by selling fruits and vegetables from the back of a truck. Joe helped him.

After 1936, and perhaps even before, the main income for the family was the rents from the Burnett Place apartment house. When Papa became sick and Joe started poking around in the records, Joe discovered that Papa hadn't paid the mortgage or taxes on the apartment building since about 1930. The butcher shop had ceased generating income long before it officially failed. They had been living on the Burnett Place rents, without paying the mortgage or taxes, for some time. Mama must have known that they were living on borrowed money and time. On the other hand, the property was probably in such bad shape that no lender would reposess it. Instead, the lenders helped Papa find painting work to generate some income.

When Papa did get work painting apartments, he drafted Joe and Bernie to help. Joe was 17 and Bernie was 13. Bernie was a sickly kid and tired fast. Joe sang to him to keep him going. Here is one of the songs that Joe sang to Bernie:

Sung to the tune of "The Crown of Burgundy":

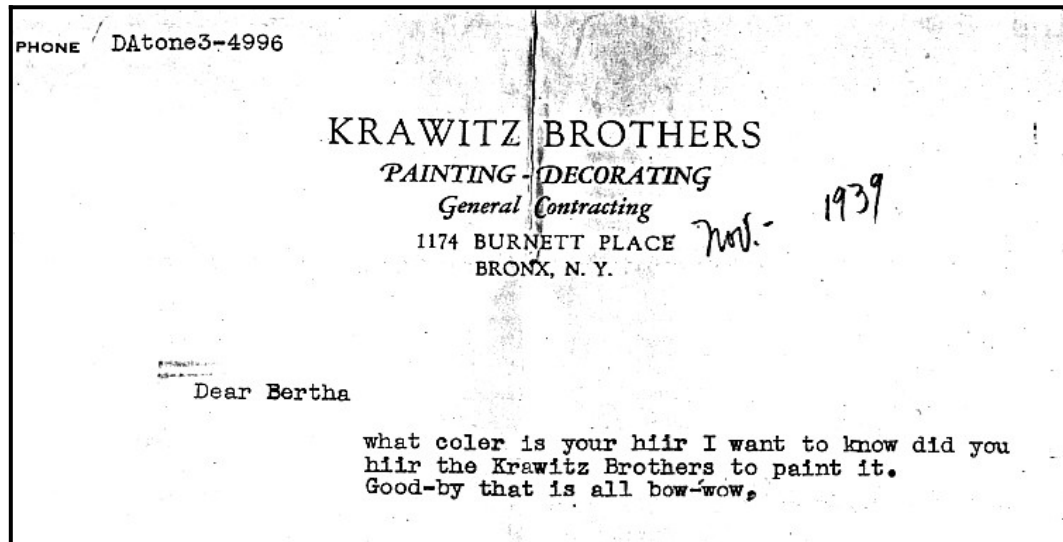
Swing your brush my brother, swing a little further,  
and we'll soon be done in here  
On the ceiling, down against the wall,  
windows, woodwork, closet and the hall  
Swing your brush my brother, swing a little further,  
and we'll soon be done in here.

( Bernie later listed painting and building maintenance as areas of civilian expertise on his Army discharge papers. )

By about 1939, Papa tried to get contracts on his own under the business name of Krawitz Brothers. Papa's concept for this business was that he and Joe would do the work and Masha would be the secretary/bookkeeper. Therefore she had to take commercial ( typing and bookkeeping ) courses at James Monroe High School.



Papa had some letterhead printed showing the business as “Krawitz Brothers”. I never knew what his concept for this name was. He bought a small portable Royal typewriter for Martha. I, of course, fooled around with the typewriter, as you can see.



#### **Papa's first letterhead**

Bertha saved this letterhead because I used it to tease her after she had her hair dyed. Mama had Bertha dye her hair to cover some premature graying.

When Joe left home to work on a farm, Papa took in a partner named Simon. The letterhead was then changed to Krawitz and Simon. Mama saved this letterhead because I used it to draft a letter to the “Lone Ranger” (not shown).



#### **Papa's second letterhead**

Papa used his car to carry the paint supplies for his painting business. The car always had paint all over the inside. It was a mess.

### **6.5 JOE’S CONFLICTS**

Joe argued with Papa about many different things. One argument in particular that I overheard took place in our basement. It was about how clean a drop cloth needed to be. Papa claimed that a particular drop cloth was clean enough to use on a job. Joe maintained that, since it wasn’t clean enough to eat off of, it wasn’t clean enough to paint on. Even at my young age, Joe’s argument seemed a bit silly.



Joe also argued with Mama over the amount of time he spent with the Boy Scouts while underperforming academically. Mama thought his time would be better spent on schoolwork or making some money to help the household. Scouting, to Mama, was another example of Joe's poor judgment in how he used his time.

The first incident that Joe told me about occurred in 1932, when he was 12. He had saved \$5 in tips from doing Papa's deliveries. Without telling Mama, he spent the \$5 to buy a bicycle. Mama thought that was extravagant and made him take it back. A second incident occurred later, when he spent \$14 he had saved on a pair of skis at Macy's. Mama asked why he had "paid good money for a pair of sticks..." and made him take them back also. (\$14 in those days was equivalent to about \$200 in 2000)

In 1937, Joe won \$15 at a movie bingo game. Without telling Mama, or anyone else, he took the bus to Washington, DC to attend the Boy Scout Jamboree. Mama learned of his whereabouts from a post card. He was taken in by a troop from Wisconsin that gave him his meals. While at the Jamboree he wrote to Mama asking for \$4 to buy souvenirs. I don't know whether Mama sent him the money for the souvenirs.

Although Joe and Mama had a stormy relationship, Joe's relationship with Papa was even worse. Mama knew that she needed to separate him from Papa. Later she found a way to do that.

## **6.6 MANAGING THE APARTMENT BUILDING**

Papa tried to save money on coal by buying cheaper scrap lumber to fuel the furnace. But the lumber flared up too rapidly, causing localized overheating that cracked the boiler. I recall discussions of some stop leak compound to plug leaks in the boiler. Later, Joe told me that the cheap lumber was the reason for these furnace failures. The tenants, of course, were always without heat until the furnace was repaired.

Sometimes only Mama and I were home when the furnace needed to be fed with coal to keep the heat or hot water going to the tenants. I recall helping Mama to shovel coal into the furnace, although I could never fling it way to the back like she could. I also helped her to shake down the ashes and shovel the ashes into a garbage can. These cans had to be put at the curb with the garbage. They were left for Joe or Papa to do that job.

There were times when the furnace fire went out and Mama couldn't get the fire started again. One cold winter day she asked me to look around the empty lots to see if I could find some wood to get the fire started. The lots were pretty well picked clean by many other people on the same mission, but I found something and she got it going. I saw how troubled she was. I really felt sorry for her.

## **6.7 CORRESPONDENCE WITH RUSSIA**

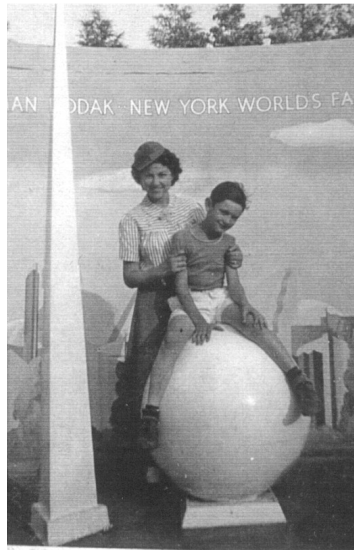
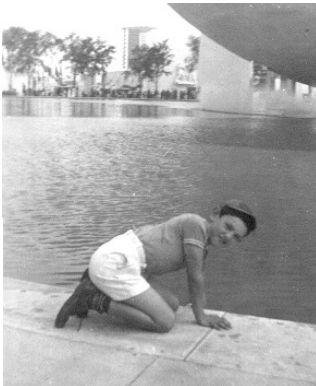


The letters told us that Mama and Uncle Morris wrote to Nechemia Zvi during this difficult period. In one of his responses, Nechemia Zvi sympathizes that Uncle Morris is unemployed, and notes that the family in Russia also is in financial difficulty.

In 1938, Mama wrote to her father in Gorki about her situation in America. We can understand her state of mind from her fathers response ( as translated by Martha). The letter from Nehemia Zvi was written in February 1939. He refers to her letter to him eight months earlier on Rosh Hodesh Elul, probably early August 1938. He asks why she says that she “was higher than her friends and now have become the lowest. And so much so that you would not recognize me.” He says “your mother had all the long years worried about her children and what did she accomplish with all her worries? One must not take life so much on one’s self. Have faith that God will make everything good again.” “One must be proud and not worry about the whole world.” Mama must have been very depressed by our family’s situation in 1938 when she wrote to him. Knowing what I know now, she had good reason to be depressed then. Whatever her depression, her care for me seemed undiminished, and for that I am grateful.

## **6.8 THE NEW YORK WORLDS FAIR---1939-1940**

Bertha took us to the 1939 Worlds Fair at Flushing Meadow Park in Queens. Otherwise we would not have gone. I can recall being excited by many of the exhibits.



**Larry, Bertha and Bernie  
at the Worlds Fair**



In particular, the General Electric exhibit showed how power could be generated by nuclear fusion. I can still remember that exhibit.

1939 was about the time that the Manhattan Project had started to develop the atom bomb. Twenty-three years later (1963), after fusion weapons had been developed, I went to work at the General Electric Research Laboratory. There I met Henry Hurwitz, the creator of the 1939 GE World's Fair exhibit on nuclear fusion. Fusion reactions had still not yet generated electrical power in 1963, and they still haven't in 2000. I remain amazed by Hurwitz's leap of imagination to think of such an exhibit, and GE's chutzpah to suggest that it was "just around the corner."

## **6.9 PLAY.....1939-1940**

There was a lot of open space for kids to wander and play around Burnett Place. As I grew older my range widened to include the area down to the East River. The shoreline along the polluted river was lined with some woods and the water was populated by horse shoe crabs. I loved wandering in the woods and, for fun, occasionally killing the crabs by plunging a stick through their shells.

When we had a ball, we either played stickball on the smoothly tarred Tiffany Street or "stoop ball" off of our front stoop. In "stoop ball" a "batter" threw the ball against the stairs and the "fielder" stood by the curb. The rebounding ball had to clear the curb. If the fielder caught the ball without a bounce, that was an out. Otherwise the batter was credited with a base for each time the ball bounced. Thereafter the scoring was like baseball. When Mama called me in at night I would plead for just one more inning, and she usually responded with "No more innings, enough innings."

After dark we played "kick the can and running bases" at the corner of Burnett Place and Tiffany Street under the street light in front of the Matisse's house. We used a soup can from the garbage. The "batter" put the can on "home plate," which was the curb under the light. The fielder stood in middle of Tiffany Street. Then the batter kicked the can into Tiffany Street and ran to first base. If the fielder retrieved the can and touched home plate while the batter was between bases, the batter was out. Otherwise the batter could advance. Mama didn't like this game because it ruined my shoes. She was always careful to get me good shoes, with a wide toe area, so that my feet could develop. They always were the style of Boy Scout shoes...she got them at a store on the Hunts Point Avenue culvert bridge.

## **6.10 THE FAMILY'S JEWISH LIFE**

I can't recall anything during my early life that I can associate with Jewish ceremony or religious life. We did some things that I remember, but not because they had some religious connotation. Starting in about 1940, once a year, Mama changed the dishes, stocked up on Nyafat (a hydrogenated vegetable oil product still sold at Passover), and made matzoh brie. After Si and Meir got involved with us, instead of having dinner in



the kitchen, we opened our expanding table in the living room. I had some wine and fell asleep.

An example of how out of the Jewish mainstream we were sticks in my memory. I came into the house after playing outside one afternoon and called Mama to the front window to see a line of strange people walking down Tiffany Street to the East River. The men were all dressed in dark suits and hats, and the ladies were dressed up too. Mama explained that this was a day when “some” Jewish people went to the river to throw bread in. This was not, however, any special day in our house. Everyone just went about their business and play.

Bernie received no Jewish education at all and no bar mitzvah. This was probably the result of the Depression and the general problems in the family, but also due to his low priority for allocation of family resources. I didn’t require many resources and got only the minimal allocation appropriate for a small but growing family mascot.

To me, being Jewish meant only three things: listening to Mama’s Yiddish radio station, not celebrating Christmas, and enduring the anti-semitic abuse I took from the Farrell and Higgins kids.



**Masha and me with Limpy in 1940**

## **6.11 OUR DOG**

We always had a dog. For the most of my first eight years our dog was named Limpy, a small white haired hybrid of about every type of mutt that roamed our streets. She got her name because she limped from some permanent injury. Her white hair always shed on the bristly blue sofa. She had the run of the house and would let us know when she had to go outside. When she forgot and let go inside, Mama grabbed her by the scruff of the neck and rubbed her nose in it.



## 6.12 THE FAMILY IN 1940



**Bertha, Mama, Masha, and Larry , 1940**

In 1940, when I was eight years old, Bertha was 22 and finishing Hunter College. Joe was 20, had finished James Monroe High School and was working with Papa. Masha was 18, had finished James Monroe High School, and what she was doing I don't remember. Bernie was 16 and midway through Food Trades Vocational High School.

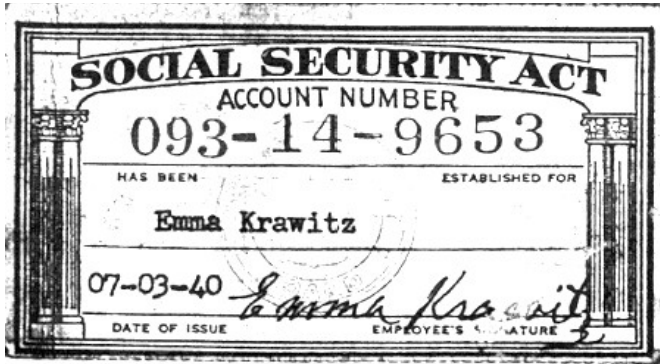
I recall knowing that Bertha had some activity going on at the 92nd Street Y, but I didn't know that she there mainly trolling for social contacts.

Masha had been involved in some Zionist youth groups while at Monroe High School. Some of her classmates were involved during the thirties in smuggling guns and war supplies to Palestine. Upon finishing High School she joined a branch of the Hapoel Hamizrachi, a Zionist Youth organization that met someplace in the East Bronx.

She once took me there. It was in a storefront on a corner where two streets met at an acute angle. She too had her eyes out for social contacts. The leader of this group was a rabbinical student at Yeshiva University who I noticed was a lot shorter than she was.

Masha's Jewish interest in High School became the turning point in our family's Jewish development. We had all but left Jewish life. She ultimately led us back. This will become clearer as the story of our family unfolds.





Mama applied for a Social Security card in 1940. She must have started to look for work outside the house then. World War II work was starting. Her only marketable skill was as a sewing machine operator. She didn't find such work until sometime in 1942.

In 1940 both Bertha and Masha met men they would marry the following year. These men undoubtedly had more influence on my early development than my own father. 1940 marks the end of the first phase of my life and the beginning of the rest.

### 6.13 MY NON-EXISTENT EXTENDED FAMILY

I had no extended family beyond Mama, my brothers and sisters, and their families. What happened to my uncles, aunts and cousins?

Papa had no family except for his aunts, Chassy and her husband Reuven Dranov, and Eva Chipov. I never met them. The closest I came to Reuven Dranov was the sight of the rear end of his horse. At least I think it was his pushcart that Mama pointed out to me. Perhaps she was only showing me what his looked like. In any case, Reuven Dranov was a person I never met or knew. The same for Chassy. I never even heard that either of them died. So they never existed for me. Bertha has memories of these people and the Chipov. They will be described in her memories.

Mama had brought over her brothers Izzy and Morris and her sister Mary.

I may have met Izzy once, because I remember being in their apartment somewhere near Crotona Park. I don't remember him, his wife Tonta Lena, or their many kids.

Mary died in the early 1930's. Her husband ran away leaving their daughter Ethel, who was about Bernie's age, to be raised in foster homes and orphanages. Mama worried about Ethel and took me to visit her in an orphanage one time. I remember her visiting us at Burnett Place. Then, while we lived on Prospect Avenue, Ethel met and wanted to marry a man named Pete Xenos. Pete operated a hot dog store on Westchester Avenue near the intersection with Prospect Avenue. He wasn't Jewish, but Ethel wasn't Jewish enough to be bothered. She came to Mama, as her only relative, for a "blessing" of the match. Mama had no alternative. I never saw Ethel or Pete Xenos after that. I don't know if there was a wedding that Mama attended. I think not. Bernie corresponded with her on a New Year basis. The news was always bad or worse. She had several daughters. Pete died. Either she withdrew from the family, or the family rejected her, when she married Pete in 1941.



Morris and his wife Ray fancied themselves socially above us. Ray was an American-born woman who Morris met on a trip to California. Morris worked in the garment industry where he was a “cutter”, one of those who cut the fabric into the patterns for the garments. The cutters considered themselves a skilled craft, as compared to common sewing machine operators like Mama. They had their own, all-male, branch of the union and higher pay rates. With this steady income over many years, Morris and Ray could afford a small house in Englewood New Jersey. They had one son, Leonard.

I remember Morris visiting us at least two times at Burnett Place. He never came to Manida Street. Ray and Leonard never visited us at all. After we lived on Manida Street Mama dragged me out to their house. First Ray forced Leonard to show us how he played the piano. Then we went outside and ran around the paths through the woods near the house. When we returned I could see that Ray was angry that Leonard was sweating in his nice clothes. I had the feeling that he enjoyed running around with me and that he rarely had the chance. That was the last time I ever saw any of them.

Morris considered himself something of an intellectual. He joined the Ethical Culture Society as an alternative to either religious Judaism, or the Yiddish culture of the Sholem Aleichem type. The Society consisted mostly of Jews who thought that religious ritual should have been left in Europe, but who wanted to retain the ethical content. They were also trying to avoid becoming targets of antisemitism. With all his pretexts Mama considered Morris a nebbish, unlike her athletic father. She detested Ray, and the feeling I think was mutual.

After Ray died in about 1950, Bertha and Si had talked Morris into renting a senior citizen apartment in Far Rockaway. He was found dead in his Englewood house before he could move in about 1952. About a year later, when I heard that he had died, I asked Mama why she didn't let me know. She said that I didn't need to know.

As she did with Ethel before she married Pete, Mama tried to stay in touch with Leonard. She wrote to him to let him know that I was going into the Air Force and invited him to get together with her sometime. His answer was clear. Don't call me, I'll call you. Then he never called. I never felt any inclination to contact Leonard after I saw that response. Joe and Saul visited Leonard once. That still didn't stimulate any interest. Bertha recently got what she eagerly interprets as a nibble. I'm still waiting for an initiative and am not sure how I would respond. He is still his mother's son.

After we moved to Manida Street Mama went on a campaign to reacquaint herself with her “cousins”. These were the Lipacks in Bayonne, NJ and the Lipacks in Stamford, Conn. Both of these families operated furniture stores. The one in Bayonne had a daughter that was “just right for Joe”. We made one visit to each of these. The trips by train and bus were tiring. We never stayed overnight. There were no repeat visits. They never came to see us.

I recall the visit to Stamford in particular. Although we didn't stay overnight, we were still there after dark in late October or early November. A boy about a year or two older than me invited me to go out with him to do “tricks on people”. He took a handful of toothpicks. I hid behind a hedge while he went up to the door and stuck a toothpick into the doorbell. Then he



ran and hid with me. Invariably the door opened and an adult, seeing no one there, felt for the doorbell and extracted the toothpick. He did this to about a half dozen houses before he quit. I never heard of Halloween in the Bronx. Many years later I remembered this night and made the connection.

The only relative I remember visiting us was Uncle Morris twice, and Ethel once or twice. This hardly constitutes an extended family. There are many possible explanations. None of them matter.



## 7. EIGHT TO ELEVEN YEARS OLD - MAJOR CHANGES IN THE FAMILY

### 7.1 BURNETT PLACE –JUNE 1940

Bertha brought Si Spielman home to Burnett Place to meet the family in 1940. He seemed very big and full of fun. Si liked to sit on our blue convertible sofa with a bristly finish in the living room.

On one visit Si sat down on the sofa a little too hard, causing the sofa to cave in. Thereafter, the sofa always sagged in one corner. Mama didn't say anything at the time, because he was Bertha's boyfriend. Mama never forgot, however. Nineteen years later, as she admired an upholstered wooden chair in our Arlington, Mass. living room, Mama warned Marge not to let Si sit in it.

Si liked to grab me as I ran by the sofa, and turn me over in the air. Mama was afraid that he would hurt me. I was so skinny that Mama said my ribs looked like a washboard (I was eight years old.). She repeatedly warned him to be careful with me.

Si impressed me because he had played football for DeWitt Clinton High School. He was the only adult that I knew who seemed to know about sports.

Masha also brought Meir Ostrinsky to Burnett Place. He amazed us on one visit by walking some enormous distance to get there. It must have been a Saturday afternoon. I don't remember much else about his visit.

### 7.2 PROSPECT AVENUE-JUNE 1941

We moved from Burnett Place to 594 Prospect Avenue in June of 1941. The distance was less than a mile, but the move took us across the culvert. The move is shown on the map.

I am not sure why we moved. Perhaps Papa was painting apartments for the owner of the building and took rent in exchange for payment. Or perhaps, after Bertha and Masha began courting, Mama wanted to make a better impression with her future sons-in-law than she could at Burnett Place.





Prospect Avenue was a cobblestone main shopping avenue that intersected Southern Boulevard four blocks south of Longwood Avenue. The map shows the location of our apartment building.

The apartment building was a five-story walkup with a fire escape that hung off of the front of the building over the sidewalk. Bernie and I shared one of the two front rooms that faced the street. My bed was in front of the window that opened to the fire escape. Bertha and Masha had their own rooms. Mama and Papa had the fourth bedroom. I think we were on the second floor.

**Joe** didn't live with us on Prospect Avenue. He had graduated from Monroe High School three years earlier in 1938. He dreamed of going to college to become a forester, but couldn't afford to. After graduation, he worked with Papa in the painting business for one year, until the summer of 1939. By then Mama began to worry that Joe would be drafted for World War II. She also worried about his constant friction with Papa in the painting business. She solved both worries by finding a farm school near Poughkeepsie, NY for Joe.

Joe went to the farm school in the summer of 1939. The school provided only six months of training, after which the students, mostly troubled city boys, found work as farm laborers. After completing the school, Joe worked at a series of farm labor jobs.

The farm work enabled him to apply for the Selective Service (draft) deferment that Mama wanted. The application shown below was submitted in 1941, while he was working at Alderney Farms in Morristown, New Jersey. He was working there when we moved to Prospect Avenue.

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM			
AFFIDAVIT—OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION (Industrial)			
(Affidavit—Occupational Classification (General), Form 42, is provided for use in activities where the items on this form are not applicable)			
Name of registrant (Signed) <u>Joseph Krawitz</u>			
Selective Service Order No. (Signed) <u>11,031</u>		Age (Signed) <u>21</u>	
Local Board <u>78</u> (Number)	<u>Bronx</u> (County)	<u>N.Y.C.</u> (City)	<u>N.Y.</u> (State)
Title of present job <u>Barn man and milker</u>			

**Joe's application for an occupational draft deferment in 1941. His occupation is shown as "Barn man and milker." This is only a part of the application. He was working in Morristown, New Jersey.**

**Mama**, within days after we moved to Prospect Avenue, started selling vegetables from a stall across the street from our building. The houses on that side of Prospect Avenue were two story brownstones. Their steep front stoops lead up to the first floor that was half a landing above street level. Next to each stoop was a down stairwell leading to a landing below street level. Street vendors sold fruit and vegetables from outdoor stalls that they set into the down going stairwell. From my window I could see the continuous string of



these stairwell food vendors for the length of the block. Mama rented one of these stairwells directly across the street. She set up a stall where she sold vegetables all day long, starting in June 1941.

**Bertha and Si** were married on July 4, 1941, about a month after we moved to Prospect Avenue. Bertha was 23. Si was 26. Since we didn't belong to a synagogue, Masha's boyfriend Meir used his connections at Yeshiva U to arrange for the wedding to be held at YU in a large room on the ground floor of his dormitory building. Meir, as an ordained rabbi, officiated.

Mama brought some cakes that she baked and some bottled drinks as refreshments. Si brought some records and a record player to provide the music for line and conventional social dancing. I remember the wedding canopy along the long wall. I didn't know many of the people. They must all have been from Si's family. (I have converted a 16-millimeter movie of the wedding to VHS videotape.)

Bertha remembers Papa and Mama both being very depressed at her wedding.

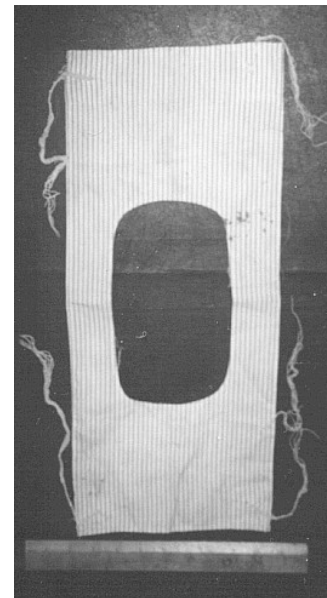
Papa was depressed over his declining health and concern for the fate of his family in Russia. The Germans had launched their invasion of Russia just eight days before the wedding. As people danced at the wedding, the Germans had already captured the Jewish Pale and half of the Jews in the Ukraine. German Armies were moving rapidly toward Kiev. Papa may have been the only one at the wedding who was depressed over the thought of what the Germans might do with all of these Jews.

Mama was depressed because she didn't approve of Si.

Our move to Prospect Avenue meant that I had to transfer to PS 62 after the summer, in September 1941,

**Meir's** influence on my life also began that September. He acted through Masha, who enrolled me in my first Hebrew School in September 1941.

Although I was nine years old, I had never been inside a synagogue. Our family hadn't paid any attention to religious education. We had no Jewish affiliation or religious symbolism at home that I can recall. Nevertheless, in September of 1941, Masha enrolled me in a Hebrew School. I had to wear a "tsitsit" to class.



**My 1941 tsitsit in 2001.  
Note the 12-inch ruler**

The school was in a large synagogue on the corner of Southern Boulevard and Leggett Avenue. The teachers were younger than Masha and fun to be with. They gave me my first "machberet". I think I learned the blessings for bread and vegetables. I first heard about Chanukah in that school when I was nine years old.



**Papa** took me to synagogue for my first time during the Holidays in September of 1941, probably also due to Masha's pressure. The synagogue was not the one on Leggett Avenue where I attended Hebrew school, but was up Prospect Avenue in the direction away from Southern Boulevard toward Westchester Avenue. (I think this was the same synagogue where Joe had his Bar Mitzvah.) From where we sat in the balcony, we had a clear plan view of the bimah. The large bimah had a Torah reading table far enough in front of the ark so that the choir could sit between the reading table and the ark. Papa wore his talis and patiently explained who all of the people on the bimah were, what each of them would be doing, and what the roles of the cantor and the choir was. It never occurred to me to ask him how he knew so much, since I never knew that he went to any synagogue. We never went again. This was the only time that I ever spent alone with Papa that I can recall, except for helping him with his insulin.

**Bernie** and I listened to the famous seventh game of the 1941 World Series on the radio together, that same September. This Series was between the New York Yankees and the Brooklyn Dodgers. Bernie was an avid Dodger fan. I was a Yankee fan. He claimed he was a Dodger fan because they represented the world's underdog. I liked the Yankees because they always won. The Yankees were one run behind the Dodgers going into the bottom of the ninth inning of the seventh and deciding game. The Yankees seemed sure to lose the game and the series. Bernie was very excited. After two Yankee outs, Tommy Henrich came to bat and had two strikes called on him. On the next pitch Henrich swung and missed. Bernie thought the game was over. He jumped out of his chair cheering. Then Mickey Owen, the Dodger catcher, dropped the ball, allowing Henrich to reach first. Then it was my turn to cheer. The Yankees went on to win. Bernie let me needle him for weeks about this without getting angry. He only smiled and recited the Dodger slogan, "Wait 'til next year."

**Mama** worked in her stairwell vegetable stall until the weather turned cold in the fall of 1941. Then she rented a vacant store in the next block on a side street. The store sticks in my memory for a very special reason. When I left school for lunch each day, I went directly to Mama's store. Mama gave me money to buy some rye bread and American cheese at the corner grocery. She then took a tomato from the shelf, sliced it, and made two cheese and tomato sandwiches for our lunches. Cheese and tomato sandwiches are still one of my favorite snacks at home when we have good tomatoes. Whenever I have one, I remember the cozy lunches with Mama in her little vegetable store when I was nine years old.

**Bertha and Si** lived with us on Prospect Avenue for six months after their wedding. They had the other front room next to the one Bernie and I shared. Two incidents stick in my memory from this period.

One night Bertha and Si went out with their friend Irving, who had a Ford coupe with a rumble seat. I remember laughing at Bertha and Si from my window, as they tried to gracefully climb over the back of the car to get into the rumble seat. Once in, they rode away up cobblestone Prospect Avenue. The next day I heard that they came home late and, having forgotten the key, found themselves locked out. Si climbed down the fire



escape from the roof and attempted to open my window. When he couldn't open the locked window, he started banging on the window to wake me up. When this failed, he gave up and returned to the roof. I don't remember how they got in. The next morning Si told everyone how soundly I slept, and how he couldn't wake me up. This was the origin of my family reputation as a very deep sleeper.

Since their room was next to mine, I was the nosy little brother that Si never had. One day I saw him with the flimsiest underwear that I had ever seen. It seemed to be just some elastic with a small piece of cloth. I asked Si what it was. He explained. That was my introduction to the Jock Strap.

I used hair tonic to get my hair in the popular slicked back style. One morning I took a bottle of fluid that I thought was hair tonic from the bathroom medicine cabinet, put some in the palm of my hand, and spread it on my hair. It combed out like hair tonic, but it had a funny smell. I remember asking, I can't remember whom, if anyone knew about the strange smelling hair tonic in the cabinet. They examined the bottle and found that the hair tonic was actually some of Papa's urine that he had set aside to test for sugar. I recall whoever was there finding my situation very funny.

One very cold afternoon, in December 1941, I went to a friend's apartment in a neighboring building to play after school. At dinner time my friend's mother called him to the table, leaving me to play by myself. I realized that I should go home for dinner, but didn't know how to leave politely. After dinner, his mother had to tell me that I probably should go home. Mama was furious that I didn't have enough sense to see that it was dinnertime and that I should have come to my own home to eat. Thirty years later I remembered this incident when Saul stayed at the Grayman's on a Friday night, and neither he nor his hosts had the sense to call and tell us where he was. Marge was as furious as Mama. I was amused. With the memory of Prospect Avenue, I realized that Saul, at ten years of age, was as socially inept as I was at nine.

**Masha and Meir** were married on December 7, 1941. She was 19 years old. He was 35. The wedding took place at Yeshiva University in the same hall where Bertha and Si were married. A friend of Meir's officiated. The cakes and refreshments, and the crowd were similar to what I remembered from the previous wedding.

Meir took me upstairs to his room before the wedding to give me a pocket watch from his dresser drawer. This was my first watch. Instead of paying attention to the wedding I stood on a chair in the back and timed everything that went on.

After the wedding, as we were leaving YU, we heard the news that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. No one seemed too excited about it.

There are no photographs of the wedding. Si was the designated photographer. He took photos, but none came out.



Meir and Masha headed directly to Pittsburgh after the wedding. Meir had a job lined up at an orphanage.

**Bertha and Si** moved out of our Prospect Avenue apartment in January 1942. They had taken a position as house parents in a juvenile home, run by the Jewish Welfare Board, in Hawthorne, New York. The name of this place was the Hawthorne Cedar Knolls School. The “school” served boys from broken homes, truants, and mild juvenile delinquents. Bertha and Si stayed there until October 1943. I enjoyed visiting them there. It was in “the country” for me.

With Bertha, Martha, and Joe gone, our family group was reduced to just Papa, Mama, Bernie and me.

### **7.3 WHITLOCK AVENUE-JANUARY 1942**

The four of us moved out of the Prospect Avenue apartment in January 1942, a month after Bertha and Si left. We had been on Prospect Avenue for 8 months.

We moved to 981 Whitlock Avenue. This move is shown on the map. Whitlock Avenue ran parallel to the railroad culvert that separated Hunts Point from the Bronx. Our apartment building was next to a gas station that opened onto Hunts Point Avenue.

Our move meant that I had to transfer to PS 175. I wanted to go back to my friends at PS 48, although we were slightly outside the PS 48 district. Instead, Mama enrolled me in a yeshiva!

The **yeshiva** must have been another idea of Masha and Meir. It was two blocks from Whitlock Avenue, across Southern Boulevard, on Fox Street. Two four-story apartment buildings had been partially converted to a school and a synagogue. The makeshift classrooms were so crowded that we spent part of the day in the darkened space used for a synagogue. There was no gym. The mandatory physical education activity was in the street. The teachers were old men with beards and accents, quite unlike any teachers I had ever seen before.

I attended the yeshiva for about three days before I told Mama about the poor conditions and protested having to go there. Then she confessed that she had had her own misgivings about the place. She had not given the yeshiva my official transfer papers from PS 62. I was therefore not yet an “officially” enrolled student. She then went to PS 48 and appealed to them to let me come back to where my friends were, even though I was outside of the district. They agreed. I was happy. Later, at Stuyvesant High School, one of my best friends, Herbert Dudack, told me he went to that yeshiva. When we moved to Rockville, Maryland, I met Max Kasten, who also went there. So I guess people survived, but it was not for me when I was ten years old.

While we lived in the Whitlock Avenue apartment, I used to roller skate to the corner grocery for milk. Mama always worried that I would fall on the roller skates and break

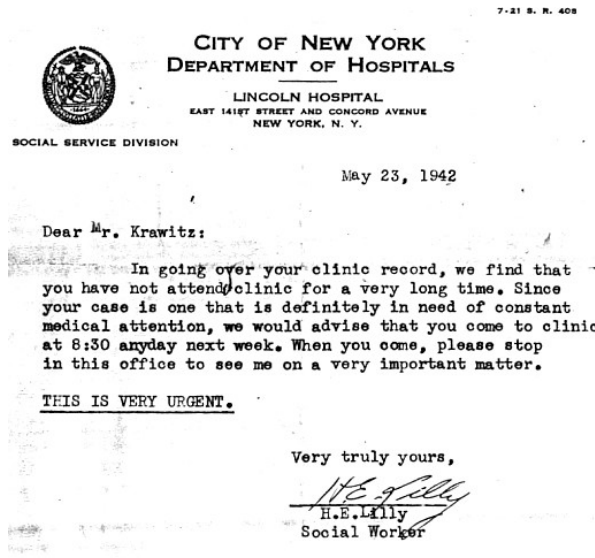


the milk bottles, but I never did. Next to the grocery was a kosher butcher where Mama bought her meat.

**Mama** and I went to the butcher shop together one day. A few chairs were set up at the side of the sawdust-covered floor. While we sat waiting our turn, Mama told me to watch the butcher as he fed a customer's meat into the grinder to make ground beef. She told me to see if he added any other cheap cut of meat or fat to the meat he was putting into the grinder. She said that customers had to watch the butcher to be sure he didn't charge them for a pound of ground beef that had been diluted with scrap meat or fat. She therefore never bought ground beef. She only bought only lean meat. I made the ground meat with our home meat grinder. Her little lecture on the craft of butchering made me wonder how Papa ran his store. I didn't ask.

**Papa** became very ill shortly after we moved to Whitlock Avenue. I don't know when he stepped on a board that had a nail sticking up and wounded his toe, but he walked with a limp. His diabetes had limited the circulation in his feet and kept the sore toe from healing. He had neglected his diet and health care, in spite of Mama's nagging. He was hospitalized, but once released, he neglected his treatment.

Even the letter from the hospital urging him to attend the clinic had little effect.



**Joe** returned from the farm in January of 1942, after Papa became ill. He didn't help Papa immediately. He first worked as a delivery driver for the Hunts Point Hardware Co. I recall riding in the truck with him. As we passed some large, nicely kept, apartment buildings in the Bronx. Joe pointed out about four building that "Papa used to own." These were the buildings he lost in mortgage defaults during the Depression.

**Masha and Meir** came from Pittsburgh to spend Passover with us on Whitlock Avenue in March of 1942. Martha remembered this Seder, but I don't. I think it was another of Meir's efforts to Judaize the family. I discovered only then that Meir had transformed my sister from Masha to Martha. They had been in Pittsburgh only three months and were already planning to return in three more months.

**Papa** went into the hospital in June 1942, after Joe had been driving the Hunts Point Hardware Company truck for several months. Joe then worked Papa's painting business while Papa was in the hospital. When Papa came out of the hospital, their old conflicts arose again. By the summer of 1942 Joe had fled back to farm work, leaving Papa to struggle on alone, with diminished health and energy.



**Martha** and Meir moved back to New York in July 1942. They rented an apartment in Brighton Beach while Meir looked for a rabbinical position. (After this point in time Meir was very insistent that we call her Martha)

**Papa's** painting work was probably part of our rental "agreement" on Whitlock Avenue. So long as Papa could paint apartments, our rent was covered, and he had some additional income.

By the summer of 1942, Papa was probably too weak to keep up his end of the Whitlock Avenue rental "agreement" after Joe left him. We therefore had to move back to Burnett Place where our rent was free.

I recall that many of the old tenants had moved out of the Burnett Place building since we last lived there. Many apartments were vacant.

#### 7.4 BURNETT PLACE-JUNE 1942

**Mama** tried to rent the empty apartments by advertising. One day a couple came to the house in response to an ad. I was watching them from our front window on the third floor as they approached. When they came close to the house, the woman looked up at the building, saw me in the window, looked at the gravel street, and told her husband "let's not even go in." I heard her clearly and understood what she was saying. Sixteen years later, Marge and I were following an apartment ad in the Allston section of Boston when we came to this shabby apartment building and saw a man in his undershirt looking out of an upstairs window. When Marge told me "let's not even go in," I had a flashback to Burnett Place.



**Burnett Place. I watched from the third floor window. Most of the apartments were empty.**

Mama also became the janitor of the building. This was very hard for her, considering the need to shovel coal and haul ashes and garbage cans. Her only help was from Bernie and me, and Papa when he was around and healthy.

**Papa**, in the summer of 1942, was no longer strong enough to paint alone. Many tasks required two people. He needed help in his painting business after Joe left him.

Papa therefore took in a partner by the name of Simon. After we moved back to Burnett Place, Simon lived in the basement apartment as partial compensation. The letterhead in Section 6.4 showed this partnership. Simon had a lump on his head that he said was from shrapnel in World War I. I saw Simon when I went into the basement to play with the dog. Mama refused to have anything to do with him.

**Mama** went out to find a job, in addition to managing



the mostly empty building. She found work somewhere along Southern Boulevard near Longwood Avenue in a plant that made raincoats for the Army. I remember some of the oilcloth that she sewed to make these raincoats. It was stiff and crackly. She managed to get enough remnants to make a hat and a jacket for me. This job, like the vegetable store, gave Mama some independent income and sense of independence as Papa's health and earnings declined.

**Bertha and Si**, in Hawthorne, provided a destination away from Burnett Place for me. Mama sent me to visit them several times. Bernie took me at first. Later I went alone.

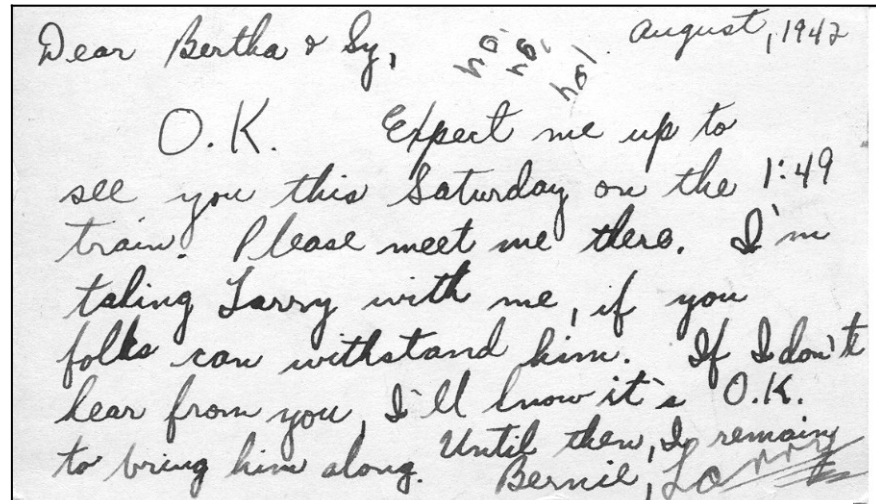
The trip to Hawthorne took about three hours. I walked to the subway at Longwood Avenue where I took the train downtown to 125th street. At 125th street I walked cross-town for two long blocks through Harlem to the elevated New York Central Railroad station.

There I bought a ticket to Hawthorne

and waited for the train to Albany. The train always stopped in White Plains to switch from the electric engine needed in New York City to the coal-fired engine that was used upstate. Between White Plains and Hawthorne, I enjoyed putting my hand out of the train window to catch some of the engine ash as it went by.

When I arrived at the Hawthorne train station, I walked up a steep hill for about a mile to get to the "school". After one trip I discovered a wooded path that I liked to take. The path led from the road, through a pine grove and a marsh, to the back yard of Bertha and Si's cottage. I liked the seclusion of the marsh, the frogs that I saw, the marsh plantain and the feeling that I was in the wild. I had no fear. I wasn't surprised that Mama let me take a three-hour trip like this alone. I was ten years old.

The residential part of the "school" consisted of a group of large two story cottages that housed about a dozen boys and a houseparent couple. The cottages were arranged around a large grassy quadrangle. All of the cottage groups ate together in a large dining room. The boys in Bertha and Si's cottage were a little older than me. I didn't interact with them very much. I liked to spend most of my time exploring the woods.



Dear Bertha & Si, August 1, 1942  
O.K. Expect me up to  
see you this Saturday on the 1:49  
train! Please meet me there. I'm  
taking Larry with me, if you  
folks can withstand him. If I don't  
hear from you, I'll know it's O.K.  
to bring him along. Until then, I remain  
Bernie, La

**Postcard Mailed Sept 1, 1942**



One day during the summer I saw some of the boys swinging from a high chinning bar to see how far out they could fly after launching themselves from the bar. This one time I decided to compete. On my first launch from the bar, my legs slid out from under me as I landed. I felt the sharp pain as my elbow hit the ground. The school's dispensary sent me to a local hospital where I had my elbow x-rayed. Although my elbow wasn't broken, the hospital immobilized it with a flexible cast that I wore for about a month. Mama was very unhappy to see me in a cast for the next few weeks of that summer.

**Lucky**, a stray dog, joined the family when we returned to Burnett Place in the summer of 1942. Bernie named him Lucky because he thought the dog had survived being hit by a car. The impact with the car damaged his spine, according to Bernie. This explained why his rear end was not directly behind his front end when he ran. I didn't care. Lucky and I were special friends. Lucky was a small dog. His short white hair shed noticeably on the blue sofa.



**My elbow cast at Hawthorne**

I found and adopted Joe's 28-inch bicycle, which he had left at Burnett Place. This was my first bicycle. I struggled to get it out of the cellar. I was too short to mount it directly. I had to balance it against the front stoop, stand up on the stairs, swing my leg over the rear wheel, and then pedal off before I fell over. The bicycle gave me a great feeling of freedom. If I avoided the Spofford Avenue hill, I could easily pedal around the whole flat area down to the river.

I began to use Papa's wrenches on the bike. I took apart the coaster brake for fun, with its many disks, just for the challenge of putting it back together. The arm that connected the brake to the frame was labeled, in large letters, "BENDIX." Who could have predicted that forty years later I would be the Director of Research of the BENDIX Corporation? I was then only a grubby ten year old in Burnett Place.

(By 1981, Bendix no longer made the bicycle coaster brake. It had become a large aerospace and automotive components company. The first time I saw the Bendix aircraft brake I recognized that it was modeled after the bicycle coaster brake I used to take apart. This type of brake is now the standard commercial aircraft brake.)

I also began to get interested in electricity. I found that I could wire lamps and switches and make them work. I took a doorbell buzzer from an empty apartment, hooked it up to a battery, and made it sound like a Morse code sender. I had read about Morse code in Joe's Boy Scout Handbook. (Joe also had a mirrored gadget for sending code by reflected sunlight and flags for sending code by semaphore.) When I stole that first doorbell buzzer from the vacant apartment, I had a feeling that we didn't need the buzzer there any more. My feeling was correct. That apartment was never rented again.



**Meir**, by September of 1942, found a pulpit in time for the High Holidays. The congregation was near Cortelyou Road and Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn. He and Martha moved from Brighton Beach to an apartment near the synagogue.

Once the summer of 1942 ended and the September school term started, I resumed my old trek to PS 48 walking back up Spofford Avenue again, or through the same abandoned lots that never changed.

Later in the fall of 1942, Mama enrolled me in my second Hebrew school. I had been out of Hebrew School for six months, since we moved from Prospect Avenue.

This Hebrew School was near the top of the Spofford Avenue hill, about a half a block on our side of PS 48. The “teacher” was a bearded man with a strong accent. He operated the Hebrew school on the first floor of a two- family house. The classroom was the back room of his apartment. On nice days he also used the back porch. All ages were in the same room at one time. He ran the school on a cash basis. Students had to pay each day for the day’s Hebrew lesson. It was bedlam. I attended this Hebrew School for about a week. Then I stopped going. (I realized from Joe’s description that this was the same Hebrew School he attended.)

**Papa** listened to the radio every night for news of the Russian front during 1942 and the spring of 1943. I looked at the maps in the newspaper and tried to figure out how close the German armies were to Vereschak and Kiev. I knew the geography of that part of the world pretty well. Unbeknown to us, the Germans overran Vereschak in 1941. They killed Mama’s father, but her sisters and their families escaped. Their story is told in Section 2.2.4. We didn’t learn of these events until much later.

**Lucky’s** luck ran out in January of 1943. He was weak and listless for a long time and then terminally ill. Just as Lucky was about to die, Papa brought me another dog that we named Beauty. Beauty was a dark brown and black German Shepherd puppy. Beauty ran with power, like a big dog should run, with long strides and speed. Not like Lucky who always ran sideways with small quick steps and not much speed. The sight of Beauty was all Lucky could take. Lucky died shortly thereafter.

**Martha and Meir**, in April 1943, invited Mama to send me to stay with them for a few days at their apartment near the Cortelyou Road subway station in Brooklyn. I had no idea why I was going there. I left our house when Mama said I had to go, and went as fast as I could, given the limitations of the subway system. I found their building and then their apartment on the ground floor. Martha answered when I rang their doorbell. She quickly shooed me in to the bathroom to wash me up, comb my hair and put a yarmulke on my head.

Meir was not very friendly at all. He shouted at me for being late. I didn’t, at first, understand what I was late for. Then I saw the problem. They had company for dinner, and I was late for the start of dinner. What was the big deal? I must have been flustered, because I don’t remember anything about the dinner. Afterwards, tired from being up late



and from the long trip, I went into the bedroom to lie down while they talked to the company. (I had to lie down somewhere. Their company was sitting on the sofa where I was destined to sleep.) When Meir later found me dozing on the bed, he yelled at me again for putting my head on his pillow. I stayed with them for two days and couldn't wait to get home to Mama.

Mama explained that Meir was mad because this was a seder, they had invited guests from their new synagogue, and I had arrived after dark. (This was my introduction to "erev.")

She didn't try to alibi his anger at my being on his pillow. She did admonish me that he was a rabbi and a very learned man, and that I was only an eleven-year-old boy. I had "to have respect."

**Mama**, I realize now, evaluated her two sons-in-law according to European standards of "yichus," where "yichus" is a social value based on money, learning, or family relationships. Although initially unhappy that Meir was so much older than Masha, she learned to respect him for his learning. He had graduated from NYU and was ordained by Yeshiva University. He had no money and no prospects for real wealth, but he at least had a respectable profession. That and his learning became sufficient yichus for Mama. Si, on the other hand, was only a high school graduate. He was old enough to have finished college by the time he met Bertha, and had tried, but never got beyond the freshman year. He lacked both learning and money and didn't appear to have any employable skill. On top of all that, Mama detested his family. Thus, his "yichus" had almost no value in her eyes. I didn't agree with Mama. I liked Si. I didn't like Meir. But I didn't argue with her.

## **7.5 PAPA DIED-MAY 1943**

**Papa** became very sick. The wound on his big toe became infected with gangrene. I remember how awful the stench of gangrene was. Finally he went to Lincoln Hospital to have his toe taken care of. The doctors recommended amputation of the toe. He didn't survive the operation.

I recall Mama putting down the phone and saying that "Papa is no more." That was May 28, 1943. Papa was 52 years old.

When Papa died I didn't realize that I was an "orphan" until later that day when Mama unintentionally didn't serve me at the table. I responded with a quip that the kids used when we left one of them out of a game. The kid left out would say: "What am I, an orphan?" When Mama passed me by, I asked Mama, "What am I, an orphan?" She looked at me and responded sadly: "Yes mien kint, you are." Then it sank in.

We couldn't afford a private funeral chapel. The funeral party gathered in the public chapel at Lincoln Hospital. I don't recall any ceremony. After a time some man asked if we would like to view the deceased. I went forward to see Papa for the last time. I saw



the pine coffin, his powdered face, and the talis he had worn in synagogue that time he had taken me.

The burial site was in New Jersey. Four of us went in Papa's car. Joe must have driven it since Bernie didn't drive. The car broke down along the way. We had to go the rest of the way by public bus. I recall Martha being given a seat on the bus by a man. I asked Bernie why the man gave up his seat. Bernie told me it was because Martha was pregnant. That was when I first found out that Martha was going to have a baby. (Renah was born five weeks later.)

We somehow got to the cemetery. Papa's grave was in an area of the cemetery surrounded by a high black iron fence. The arched ironwork entryway had a swinging gate. I don't remember much about the funeral except for the sight of Meir. He remained outside the fence, grasping two uprights of the fence in his hands, and pushing his head as far through the fence as he could. Later I asked Mama why Meir couldn't come into the cemetery. She told me the rule about Cohanim. (The iron fence has since been cut down. Traces of the fence can still be seen in the stone threshold of the old gate.)

I have no memory of coming home from the cemetery except for Mrs. Phillips coming out to us with a pitcher of water.

We didn't sit shiva. I don't remember anyone attending a minyan to say Kaddish. Everyone went right back to their own lives and routines. Mama had to go to work.

**Joe** took Papa's car and Beauty back to the farm with him after the funeral. The growing dog was killed a few months later while chasing a car on an upstate highway.

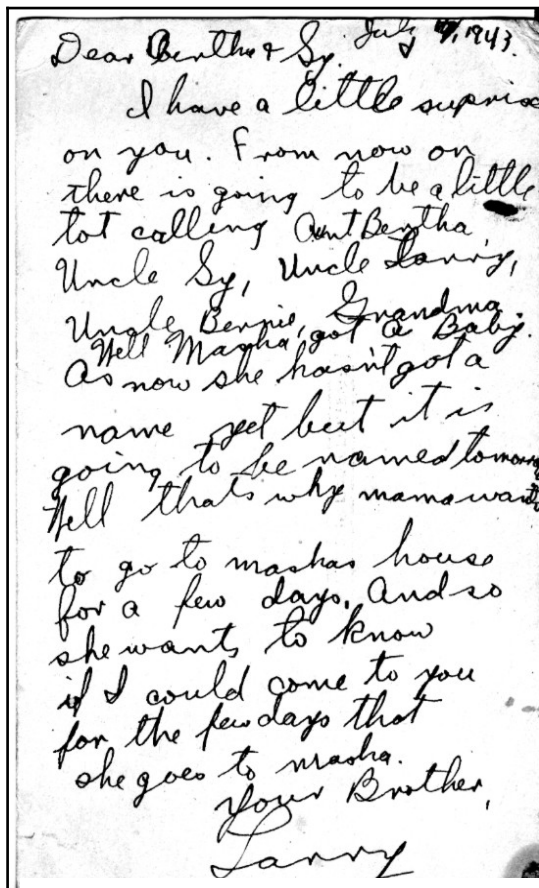
**Bernie** graduated from high school in June of 1943, shortly after Papa died. I vaguely recall that Mama and I went to his graduation. He took a job at an ice cream factory about three blocks from Burnett Place. He worked there until August 26, when he reported to the Army.

Bernie was always the good citizen. During WW II the government encouraged people to collect fat drippings from cooking in a can. The butchers were supposed to collect these cans of fat and send them to the government for use in making gunpowder. Before Bernie went into the Army he nagged Mama into collecting the fat. He then took it to a collection center. After he left for the Army she just poured any fat she had down the sink. I think this fat collection activity turned out to be propaganda. They never used the fat for manufacturing gunpowder.

**Renah** was born on July 3, 1943. The apartment on Cortelyou Road was her first home.



My postcard below, addressed to Bertha and Si in Hawthorne, announced Renah's birth



My Postcard announcing Renah's birth

1943, to an apartment Mama found for us a few blocks away at 874 Manida Street (See the map.)

before she was named. Although Meir campaigned against our use of "Masha", we didn't change to "Martha" so quickly, as can be seen on the postcard.

I went to Hawthorne alone, a couple of weeks before my eleventh birthday (July 27, 1943).

## 7.6 Manida Street -August 1943

**Mama**, having just buried Papa and now helping Masha, knew that she had to abandon Burnett Place. She couldn't physically operate the Burnett Place building without Bernie, who was scheduled to go into the Army in August. Additionally, the City Department of Finance was planning to foreclose on the building for back taxes.

Mama couldn't pay any back taxes because the almost vacant building produced no rental revenue. She had no choice but to move out and abandon the Burnett Place building before Bernie left for the Army on August 26. The letter to the Department of Finance tells the story. We moved, in mid August



As we were moving out of Burnett Place I unscrewed three more door buzzers and took them to feed my hobby.

Our Manida Street apartment had four rooms that faced toward the back and east side of the building on the fourth floor (Apartment 4B). The front door led into a foyer to the bathroom, the kitchen and the living room. French doors connected the living room to a middle room. The middle room connected to a back bedroom that had the only closet and a back window looking out on the alley and the fire escape.

Mama took the back room for herself. She put the twin beds in the middle room for Bernie and me. My window looked out over the roofs and backyards of the two-family houses that lined Manida Street. In the living room we had the dining room table with turned legs, the sofa that Si had broken, and a matching soft chair, all from Burnett Place.

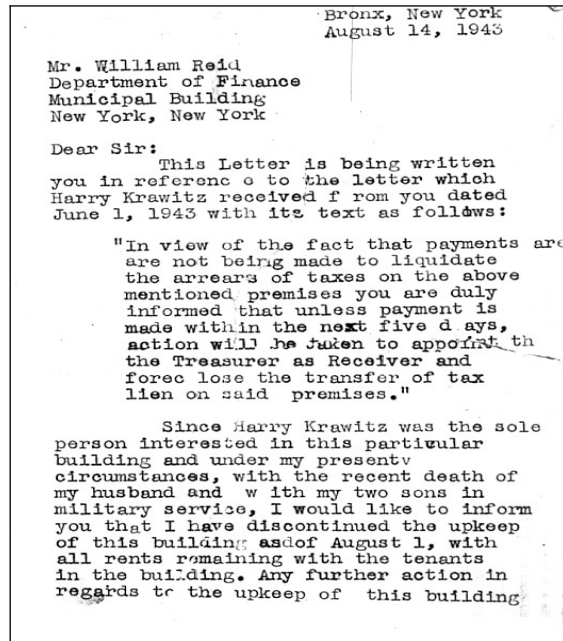
Mama sent me to a JCC Day Camp after we settled in Manida Street. With a month of the summer of 1943 remaining, she wanted to keep me busy while she went to work. I think I must have gone on a "scholarship," because Mama had very little money.

The JCC building was located on Westchester Avenue, along the elevated train line at the Freeman Street station. I think Mama learned about the camp from one of Si's sisters. Every morning I walked about .7 mile up Southern Boulevard under the elevated trains to the JCC. Counselors then took us by subway to the remote JCC campsite, where we swam and did crafts. This was where I learned how to swim.

**Bernie** reported to the Army on August 26, 1943. Now, only I remained with Mama.

I made many new friendships after we moved to Manida Street. I had always been an outsider among my PS 48 classmates while we lived at Burnett Place. Now my classmate Morty Lewin lived in apartment 2C of our building. Alan Schwartz, who became my Boy Scout Patrol Leader, and whose father was an assistant scoutmaster, lived in the two-family house next door. Other kids I knew from school lived up the street. My new friendships began in my first summer on Manida Street, after JCC Day Camp.

**Mama** had started to work in a garment plant before Papa died to augment Papa's income. Now her job became our lifeline. Her work shifted from Army raincoats to sailor hats, but her work and income stopped during the gaps between the military contracts.



**Mama's letter to the Department of Finance when she abandoned the Burnett Place building.**



There were periods of time when she was out of work and income. Although this worried me, I never discussed it with Mama. She seemed to manage her income so that we always had what we needed. After a time she joined the union. When her shop had no work, the union reassigned her to one with work. Her jobs then shifted from Southern Boulevard to downtown. We lived only two blocks from the Hunts Point subway station, so it was convenient for her to work downtown. While she was at work, I was on my own.

Mama must have worried that I was lonely when I was by myself and she was at work. She therefore found a dog to keep me company. I named him Spotty. I liked Spotty, but I didn't like the responsibility of having to walk him outside on a leash. At Burnett Place our dogs ran free in the lots. We never needed to take them for walks. I couldn't do this on Manida Street. So I gave Spotty away to a friend.



**Spotty**

Mama also asked me more than once whether she should take in another boy as a foster child just to keep me company. I always told her no, although I sometimes wondered whether she might be thinking about it for some added income. Anyway, with Bernie coming home from the Army some day, there was no room. In September 1943 I entered grade 6B, the second half of sixth grade, at PS 48.

My teacher was Mr. Schneider. I was pleased to have a man as a teacher, even though he didn't like me. He once called me a rotten apple for no good reason, I thought. I never forgot how hurt I felt that he would call me that.

Mr. Baras was the other male teacher in the school. He was serving in the army as a lieutenant at Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland. Mr. Schneider, meanwhile, was the school's promoter of War Savings Stamps. These were the smaller denomination of War Bonds. Each child was given a book with spaces to paste the twenty-five cent stamps into. A filled book entitled the student to a \$25 bond. Unlike the bonds, the stamps paid no interest. After the school sold stamps valued equivalent to the cost of a Jeep, the army let Mr. Baras drive an old Jeep from Edgewood Arsenal to the school. Our principal then symbolically presented this old Jeep to Lieutenant Baras, who "accepted" it for the US Army. I had a stamp book. I never had money for stamps and was always embarrassed because couldn't help my class in the sales competition with the other classes.



**PS 48** was a great vantage point for looking out over the East River. From the upper floors we could see well across the river. The Rikers Island prison sat in the middle of the river. On the far side of the river was LaGuardia Airport. We frequently saw the Yankee Clipper amphibian plane land in the river and then taxi up a ramp onto the airstrip at what is now LaGuardia Airport.



**PS 48. The playground is under the trees on the left.**

We also saw the Navy warships steaming from the North Atlantic to New York harbor. The submarine-safe route ran through Long Island Sound and down the East River, directly within our view. When a battleship, cruiser or aircraft carrier came through the river we all stood up to see it. The teacher frequently reminded us that we were equally very visible to any German bombers. The classroom windows were all taped to avoid flying glass in case of bombs. We also had air raid drills. We quickly got under our desks when the air raid alarm sounded.

My grades were always mediocre. The report card usually had a check in the box that indicated “could do better.” Mama would predictably tell me “if you put your head to it you could do better.” When I thought a report card would require a lot of explaining to Mama, I waited until the morning it was due and then asked Mama to sign it before she went to work. This didn’t fool Mama, but she signed it anyway.

My interest in electric buzzers continued. I refined my technique for making the telegraph key by using some steel packing strap that I found in the refuse of a store on Lafayette Avenue. One day a boy who lived on our block of Manida Street admired my buzzer and offered to trade a leopard’s head for it. I liked the leopard’s head and still had the extra buzzers that I had taken out of the apartments at Burnett Place. So we made the trade. Fifty years later I still have the tiger’s head. I won’t throw it out. I never built another buzzer key after the one I traded away.



**The leopard head...in 1998**

**Mama** had to leave the house before I went to school. I had to make my own lunch and decide what to do after school. The house on Manida Street was an easy walk from PS 48. I came home for lunch, returned to school for the afternoon, came home at three o’clock to drop off my books, and went right back to the playground.



Mama always encouraged me to think about some kind of part time job after school, even when I was eleven years old. I was therefore receptive to a friend's suggestion that I could make some money after school by doing errands for a drug store on the corner of Hunts Point Avenue and Lafayette Avenue. He introduced me to the pharmacist and I started to hang around the store after school, waiting for the chance to make a delivery. They didn't pay me. It was all for tips. I quickly learned that there was little money to be made.

After a few weeks I began working at the other drug store in Hunts Point. This store was at the Hunts Point end of the bridge over the culvert. Since all of the people who walked into Hunts Point over the bridge from the subway station passed this store, the pharmacist had fewer deliveries to homes. Most of my errands were to other drug stores to pick up drugs that he didn't have in inventory. When I wasn't running these errands I was forever wrapping some blue boxes in a nondescript brown wrapping paper. I noticed that when women came into the store they always took the wrapped box and ignored the unwrapped box. I couldn't figure out why they wanted the wrapped box, just to walk a couple of blocks up Hunts Point Avenue. What was wrong with carrying the unwrapped box with a large print label that said "Kotex?"

**Hebrew School** was Mama's other idea, or maybe it was Martha's, about what I should be doing after school. Accordingly, in the fall of 1943, Mama enrolled me in my third Hebrew school. This one was at the "little shul" on Faile Street, about three blocks from our house and two blocks from PS 48. This Hebrew school met for an hour a day on Monday through Thursday, then Saturday morning for services, and again on Sunday morning. I hadn't learned anything at my two previous Hebrew Schools. This third time I was with a lot of my friends.

**The morning minyan** was another idea. In addition to starting Hebrew school, Mama (or maybe it was Martha) also wanted me to go to the morning minyan at the "little shul" to recite the Kaddish for Papa. I had never heard about either the Kaddish or a minyan, and my Hebrew "reading" was that of a boy who had repeated the aleph class twice and was going a third time. Mama explained that it was the right thing to do, so I went.

The men at the minyan were old and bearded and spoke in deep accents that I could barely understand. They mumbled the Kaddish as if in a race to finish, and in a strange accent, and laughed at me when I couldn't keep up. They yelled at me when, as I frequently did, I forgot to bring money for the pishka, which I was sure they used as a fund to buy their schnapps. After a while I told Mama about how mean these men were to me. She didn't object when I wanted to stop going. As with the yeshiva, she seemed to have had misgivings that anyone would be helpful to an eleven-year-old boy who came to say Kaddish by himself. (Ever since, the sight of men in tefillen reminds me of those cruel, but "pious", old men.)

**Mama** had more free time for herself after we moved to Manida Street. Although she was working forty hours a week, evenings and weekends were now her own. She started to look for people to meet. The first place she looked was the Sholem Aleichem Folk



Shul, a Yiddish organization that ran a Yiddish school she had sent Martha and Bertha to many years before. She also began to light candles on Friday night. I hadn't seen her do this until we moved to Manida Street.

**Stickball** was the city kid's substitute for baseball. I started to play stickball after school with some boys who lived on Manida Street. There were very few cars along the curbs in 1943 and very little traffic. So the streets were open for play.

About eight boys in my class had formed a stickball team, called the Hawks. I couldn't join because they already had enough players to play stickball. They also charged dues and had jackets. Larry Moskowitz (Mosky), as the captain of the team, seemed to have amazing power over the team members. He fined a couple of the boys for talking to some of the girls at the Jewish home for girls on Faile Street. And they paid. Mosky's power over those boys always amazed me. He was a short fat kid who got good grades in school by, in my estimation, being a goody-goody. He was always serious and never kibitzed around in school. The teachers always asked him to lead the line when we walked through the halls.

The one thing the Hawks lacked was a team to play against. So I organized another team to challenge the Hawks. By comparison, we were a ragtag team. I played center field and had to borrow a glove from their center fielder when they went to bat. So did some of the others.

The street where we played stickball provided conveniently spaced manhole covers for home plate and second base. We used pieces of a cardboard box along the curbs for first and third bases. The backside of an apartment building was to the left of third base. To the right of first base was one of those lots that builders had scraped to the subsoil in anticipation of construction that never happened because of the Depression. One of the complications of playing on this "field" was that the apartment building had its fire escapes hanging over "left center field." I became very good at fielding balls hit into the fire escapes where they had complicated bounces before I caught them for a long out.

I realize now that I never tried to hit the "long ball." I always used a medium swing to hit the ball off of the apartment building to get a single or a double. Some of the other players tried to swing away and usually either missed or hit into a long out. When I later played baseball, I just tried to meet the ball, rather than swing from the heels. I realize now that I have always been risk averse, always trying to get ahead by modest secure advances and never risking everything in one gamble. This includes my choice of jobs and investments. This tendency first showed in the stickball games on Faile Street, when I found it prudent to go for the singles or doubles off of the fire escape instead of hitting away down the street.

Mosky never amounted to much after grade school. His charisma for sixth graders did not extend further. Morty Lewin laughs in amazement that Mosky had so much power over him. Mosky went to college and then sold used books when last seen. As Morty said, "Mosky is what you might call a.....failure." He just flamed out.



**Saturday afternoon** was when “everyone” went to the movies. Mama (or maybe this again was Martha) wanted me to go to the junior congregation at the “little shul” on Saturday mornings, and then spend Saturday afternoons doing nothing. After a few weeks of my pleading, Mama relented and gave me money to go to the movies on Saturday afternoon.

There were three theaters on Southern Boulevard about three blocks away. They were the Loews Spooner, the Loews Boulevard, and a smaller independent theater the Star.

The two Loews theaters had large, high, ornately decorated interiors, with balconies and with loge seats that were little balconies with two seats in each that hung on the sidewalls. The Star was a simpler theater with just an orchestra section, but equally ornate. All of the theaters had velvet curtains framing the stage. The price for children below the age of 14 was 11 cents.



**Southern Boulevard. The three theaters were on one long block of this shopping street. This was the view from my room in the Whitlock Avenue Apartment.**

The typical showing consisted of two feature films, ads for “coming attractions”, and a newsreel. (The newsreels of the war action were an important source of information during WW II. The government set up the War Information Office to feed the “correct” films to the theaters.) If you went into the movie at 1pm the three films would keep you until 5 p.m. You could even stay later if you wanted to see the first film over again since the films ran continuously. In the Loews theaters, kids could sit anywhere in the orchestra section. In the Star Theater a matron supervised a kids' section. When the theater was crowded, as it frequently was, they tried to get kids to sit in the first two rows. Ushers with flashlights helped people to find seats. They made sure the place stayed packed all of the time, by telling the ticket booth how many more tickets to sell.

One Saturday afternoon I went to the theater’s men’s room during the “coming attractions.” As I waited in line for a urinal, I saw that the man in front of me had a big scar on the back of his neck just like the man who led us in Junior Congregation that morning at the “little shul”. When he turned around, I recognized him as the same man. I later told Mama that I saw this man, so she would believe me when I said that “everyone” really went to the movies on Saturday afternoon.

## **7.7 THE FAMILY**

**Meir**, in September of 1943, left the synagogue on Cortelyou Road in Brooklyn, after one year, to become rabbi of a synagogue in Hoboken, NJ. He, Martha, and Renah moved to a third floor apartment located on Hudson Street in Hoboken in time for the High Holidays. It was about three blocks north of the Stevens Institute almost directly on the shore of the Hudson River. The synagogue was south of the apartment by about two blocks, and up a slight hill.



**Bernie** completed his basic training in October 1943. He was assigned to the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Corps, stationed on Cape Cod, Mass. When he came home on three-day passes he told me stories of how he had to go out in the middle of the night to set up their Anti-Aircraft guns, and how hard it was to dig the guns in the frozen sand. He brought me army patches and souvenirs. Once he even brought what I thought was a live 30-caliber machine gun bullet. Some of my friends also collected army patches and insignia from uncles or cousins in the military. But I was the only one I knew who had an older brother in the army.

Bernie changed a lot in his first year in the army. He had gone into the army as just skin and bones, weak and frequently sick. Now he was bulging with muscle, without being fat, and quite strong.

We were so happy to see each other when he came home that we had giddy pillow fights on the twin beds. The slats on the beds frequently gave out with our jumping around. Then the mattress fell to the floor with a crash. Mama pretended to bawl us out, but we could see that she was happy to see us together.

**Bertha and Si** moved from Hawthorne to Far Rockaway in October 1943. Si had taken a job as a youth activity director at a community center in Inwood. Their apartment was on the third floor of a 5-story walkup at 834 Far Rockaway Boulevard. I visited Si at the community center soon after he got there. I was amused to hear the kids call him “Mr. Spearmint.”

Starting in December of 1943 I began to visit Bertha and Si in Far Rockaway. I took the train from Hunts Point station down to 42nd street, switched to the shuttle to Times Square, and then switched again to the Seventh Avenue line to Penn Station. I then bought a ticket on the Long Island Railroad for either of two routes. One route went through the city neighborhoods of Queens and Long Island to the Inwood Station two blocks from their building. The other route went over the Jamaica Bay on a rickety bridge, and then proceeded down the Far Rockaway peninsula on elevated tracks.

The peninsula ride let me see the sea on one side and the bay on the other. I still got off at the Inwood station, but from the other direction. I preferred the bay route, especially in the winter when the peninsula bungalows were unpopulated and the snow was unbroken by any footsteps. The unbroken snow was like a scene from a postcard from someplace I couldn't imagine. (The bungalows were bulldozed years later to build the public housing projects that now dominate the scene.) This trip took over two hours. By now I was an experienced traveler. I was eleven years old.

Their apartment had one bedroom, a living room and a kitchen. The kitchen was near the entry doorway that also connected directly into the living room. The bathroom was between the living room and the bedroom, off of a connecting foyer.



Si filled the living room wall with bookcases to store his collection of books and magazines. When I went to visit, I slept on the living room sofa next to Si's collection of photography and radio magazines. My interests in photography and electronics grew from these magazines.

Single-family homes lined Far Rockaway Blvd., except for this apartment building. The walk into "the village", as the business section was referred to, was very pleasant at any time, but most pleasant on Sunday mornings in the winter. The well-kept lawns, especially the large church grounds a few blocks away were very pretty. On Sunday mornings I walked into the village to Zomicks for bagels and rolls and to pick up a New York Times.

One of my regular tasks for Bertha and Si was coloring the margarine. They wouldn't eat butter because of the fat content. They preferred margarine, but couldn't stand to eat it directly, because it looked as white as Crisco. (A Federal law, sponsored by the Wisconsin butter lobby, forbade the sale of colored margarine, as we know it now.)

Their grocery store, a small co-op grocery one block off of Far Rockaway Blvd., sold this white margarine in a sealed plastic bag that also contained a capsule of yellow dye. The consumer could color the margarine by first breaking the capsule to release the dye and then kneading the sealed plastic bag to distribute the dye until the margarine looked like butter. When the margarine was uniformly colored it was OK to break open the bag and use the margarine. We divided the work. Si usually broke the capsule. I was expected to knead the bag.

Si frequently took out his photography equipment after dinner, to show me how to develop film and enlarge photographs. He stored the enlarger in the hall and the chemicals in large brown bottles under the sink in the bathroom. We worked in the kitchen. We had to put everything away when we finished late at night because the kitchen had to be ready for breakfast.

I liked to read his photography and science magazines after I got up in the morning. I am not sure when I started going to Willoughbys and buying my own Wratten lamp and setting up my "darkroom" at home. Or when I started foraging through the war surplus electronics stores on Cortland Street lower Manhattan, in the area now occupied by the World Trade center. Si stimulated all of these interests, starting in the winter of 1943.



## 8. DEPARTMENTAL YEARS AT PS 48

### 8.1 THE DEPARTMENTAL GRADES

I entered 7th grade at PS 48 in January of 1944. This grade is the start of Junior High in many schools today. At PS 48 it became the “Departmental” grades for the boys. The girls graduated from PS 48 and went to PS 60 for Junior High.

The departmental grade teachers specialized in subject matter. We changed classes on the hour by lining up along the side of the room and then marching silently in single file to our next room. This change of classes gave us exposure to about five teachers, plus gym and shop.

**Sports** Each grade now had two all-boy classes. Each class organized in softball, basketball, and races.

Miss Brennan, in gym, taught us rope climbing, chinning, potato races, basket shooting, etc. My interest in basketball started at this point because I didn’t have the upper body strength for rope climbing or chinning, and lacked the foot speed for the potato races. The smaller boys were quicker in the potato races and better on the ropes and in chinning. With my relatively long legs, big feet, and skinny upper body, I couldn’t do many chins, climb the ropes in an L-position, or do the potato race as quickly as others. My height gave me an advantage in basketball.

**The Auditorium** We were still at war in 1944. In addition to selling Savings Stamps to help the war effort, we sang patriotic songs in the regular auditorium period. We marched to the auditorium in single file, usually led by some goody-goody like Mosky. Then two classes marched, in parallel single files, down the center aisle. A waiting teacher directed each line to peel off, one to the right and one to the left, so that no empty seats remained between students. While all of this was going on, Mrs. Schulhof played a processional like Land of Hope and Glory.

The auditorium sloped, like a theater, down to a stage in front. Velvet curtains on pull cords covered the stage. The valence above the stage displayed a gold crest with the initials JRD. These initials stood for Joseph Rodman Drake. He owned much of the land of Hunts Point before it was developed. His family gravesite was fenced in at a small cemetery lower down the hill below the school along Hunts Point Avenue. PS 48 was also the Joseph Rodman Drake School, although this name was rarely used.

I always thought of Joseph Rodman Drake when I heard the “Quiz Kids” radio program. Those smart kids answered questions on subjects I had never heard of. All of these kids came from distant states and from schools with names like the Rocky Creek School, or the Oak Farm School, or the Winthrop School. I imagined that these schools were in the communities that I saw in the movies, where everyone lived in single family houses on treed lots with nice lawns, and where the kids rode their bicycles on endless sidewalks. Their young mothers spoke English perfectly, and served them milk in a bright kitchen that looked out over the yard where the children had a tree house. None of these kids ever came from New York tenements and numbered school starting with a PS. At one point I concluded that public school kids from the grungy tenements of New York, whose mothers spoke with accents, didn’t have a chance. Then I thought of the Joseph Rodman Drake initials in the auditorium. I didn’t just go to PS 48. I went to the Joseph Rodman Drake School. Maybe that was all that their school was, a fancy name for a public school somewhere. Somehow that thought gave



me hope in the face of the Quiz Kids. Many years later I heard that the Quiz Kids program was one of those exposed as having been rigged. It made me feel a lot better.

We all had to be silent on the way to the auditorium because “Mr. Loughran may be watching, and you know what that means.” We never filled the auditorium. I never knew why they were so determined to pack us in, or why they worried so much about Mr. Loughran.

All of our assemblies were alike. First we recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Then a fat Irish teacher opened a Bible to the same place every time where she had a leather place marker, and read “The Lord is My Shepherd” to all of the Jewish and Italian kids. We sang rousing patriotic songs like When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again, Over Hill Over Dale, Anchors Aweigh, Off They Go Into The Wild Blue Yonder, etc. All the while Mrs. Schulhof was pounding away at the piano, swaying to the music, and rocking her head. Then we marched out to another processional. A few years later, when I first saw a concert pianist on television, my first thought from the way that the pianist swayed and rocked was that he was trying to imitate Mrs. Schulhof.

**Science** The “Departmental” grades had a science class. One of these classes inspired me to do my first “science” experiment, which almost led to a disastrous fire that could have consumed a couple of apartment buildings and me with it. Our teacher showed us how two liquids with different density would separate, and the lighter one would float on the other. The example was oil and water. It explained a familiar scene in the WW II movies where a sinking ship would spread oil on the water and, as the crew was going into the lifeboats, the oil would ignite. This gave me the idea that I could create a fire floating on water. I had to do the experiment myself.

I did the experiment when I went home for lunch. I took out some lighter fluid that Bernie had left there after one of his smoking flings before he went in the Army. I filled up the bathroom sink with water. Instead of putting the lighter fluid directly into the water, I wanted to do a preliminary experiment. I floated a small dish on the water, put some water in it, and sprayed some lighter fluid onto the water in the dish. Then I dropped a lighted match into the dish. I had to jump back because the ignition produced a flame that shot up toward my face. The flame quickly consumed the fluid that was in the floating dish. Just before the flame was about to go I wanted to replenish the fluid and keep the flame going. I held up the lighter fluid can again and sprayed some more fluid into the dish. This time the flame shot right up the stream of fluid to the can. Since the outside of the can and my hand had some fluid on them, both the can and my hand burst into flames. I dropped the can on the tile floor where the heat of the flames on the outside of the can forced more fluid to squirt out onto the floor. The floor was aflame and the flames spread to the wall under the towel bar. Immediately, the paint at the baseboard ignited and then the towels started to burn. Flames were going up the wall. I thought I could stamp out the flames on the floor but then my shoes started to burn. Fortunately I had the presence of mind to turn on the water in the bathtub and throw the towels into the tub. Then with the wet towels I put out the fire on the painted wall. Meanwhile the fluid on the tile floor had burned itself out. The bathroom became filled with fumes and I was faint. I went into the bedroom and opened the window, lay down on the bed, and went to sleep. I didn’t wake up until about four o’clock. When I went to the bathroom I saw that the charred walls were black for about two feet under the towel rack.

I took a rag and some scouring powder and tried to clean the black stuff off of the wall. I got a lot of it off, but the scarred paint remained, as did the charred towels. The bathroom was impossible to ventilate directly because layers of paint had long ago frozen the small window shut. I hoped the smell would leave the house before Mama came home from work. When she came home she



noticed the smell. I explained what had happened and braced myself for her tongue-lashing. To my surprise, her only concern was that I had survived. She didn't care that I was a lousy experimenter. She told me that I had to be careful with dangerous things and then proceeded to make dinner.

## 8.2 THE BOY SCOUTS

Early in the spring of 1944, during my first Departmental term, a man came to our auditorium assembly to announce that a Boy Scout troop was forming at PS 48. Boys over the age of 11 could join. I asked Mama whether I could join. She gave me the lecture about how the scouts had stolen Joe's youth, etc. In the end she let me join. The troop met at PS 48 on Friday nights. Alan Schwartz, who lived next door and was two years older than me, was my patrol leader.

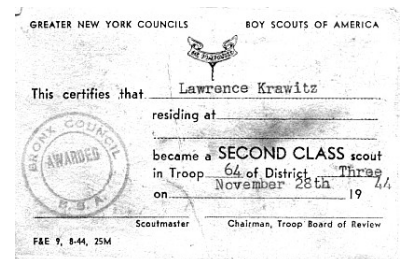
Our meetings were mostly games and marching. They were fun. I enjoyed the group camping and recall walking in woods that fall for the first time. Our first encampment was at Seton Falls Park in the Bronx. I remember hearing the crunch of dry oak leaves under foot, and thinking that was a great sound. I remember this sound whenever I am raking leaves in the fall.

The requirements for Second Class Scout gave me a set of objectives that I had never had before. One of the requirements was to walk/run a mile in exactly 12 minutes by walking 50 steps and running fifty steps. Alan Schwartz timed me running around our block many times until I slowed down to the correct pace. When I finally got the pace right, he signed that I had passed. I really enjoyed the challenge to pass the other requirements.

Our newly founded scout troop began collecting newspapers to raise money so that the entire troop to go to summer camp together. The government promoted the collection of newspapers for the war effort. We therefore felt patriotic while we collected the newspapers as a fund-raiser.

The place where we collected newspapers was an apartment development called Parkchester. This development of high-rise apartments was a planned city built by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, with green lawns and defined shopping areas.

The buildings had elevators and garbage chutes in the hallways. The hallways were carpeted and the apartments were tastefully decorated. It was a far cry from what we knew in Hunts Point. We dressed in our scout uniforms, climbed on a truck that our scoutmaster borrowed, and rang the doorbells of Parkchester. The paper collection provided enough money for all of us to go to Camp Ranaqua for two weeks in the summer of 1944.



**My Second Class Scout Card  
November 1944**

## 8.3 SUMMER CAMPS

Of my first summer at Camp Ranaqua (1944), I remember only that I cut my leg with an ax. I was chopping some logs when the ax bounced off of a log and cut my left ankle. It was a clean cut that didn't bleed too much. I still have the scar and sometimes my foot feels numb in that area. Otherwise I came home with a lot of progress toward my second-class requirements, and some merit badge progress as well. I became a Second Class scout in November of 1944.

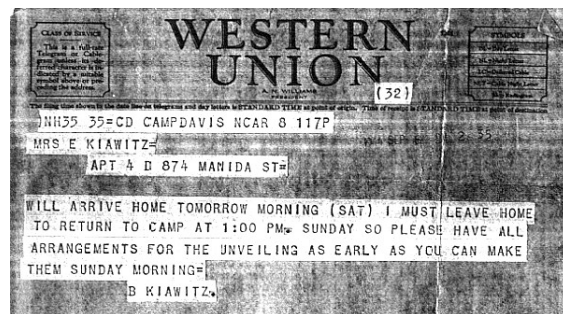
Later in the summer of 1944, after scout camp, I went to the Madison Square Boys Club camp for two weeks.. I don't have any idea how Mama found this camp. Two memories of this camp stand



The second memory of this camp is an injury I suffered on the second day of camp. I was trying to race someone back to the bunk and took a shortcut to get there. Unfortunately for me, my shortcut had clotheslines strung about the height of my neck across my path. I didn't see the lines until it was too late to avoid them. At the last moment, to avoid decapitation by the lines, I tried to duck under. One of the lines caught me across the cheek and left a deep rope burn across my cheek and inside of my mouth. Because of this injury, I didn't do any swimming that summer. I did do a lot of canoeing and became a real expert at the lanyard arts.

Mama sent me to visit Bertha and Si in Far Rockaway on the July 4th weekend of 1944. She thought I would have three days of sun and sand. But Si had scheduled a project. We were going to paint the bathroom. The actual objective of this project was to paint the bathroom window so that it was light proof. Then Si could use the bathroom as a darkroom during the day. As long as he was going to paint the window he had to paint the rest of the room to match. I helped. We spent the whole of Saturday and Sunday doing the painting. Then we spent most of Monday doing enlarging and developing. It was fun to work with Si, but, when I got home, Mama was furious with Si. She was angry that he kept me working in the house the whole weekend without going to the beach, getting some sun, and swimming in the salt water.

Mama arranged for Papa's gravestone and the unveiling. She was determined to have Bernie there. Rapid communications in those days was by telegraph from a neighborhood Western Union office.



The two telegrams show the communication between Bernie and Mama.

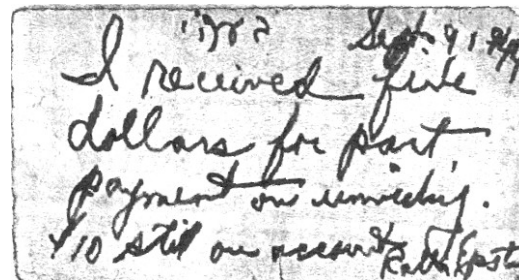
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the time.



**Papa's Gravestone.** His name in Hebrew is given as Aharon Bar Pesach Halevi (in small font)



Mama couldn't afford the full payment of \$15, according to note on the backside of the Rabbi's card.

## 8.6 BERNIE WENT TO THE PHILIPPINES-December 1944



Mama, Bernie, and me when Bernie came home for the unveiling.



The European war started to wind down in the fall of 1944. When Bernie's Antiaircraft unit was no longer required in Europe, his unit was retrained for military police duty and shipped it to the Philippines. He left by troopship on December 31, 1944 and arrived there on Feb. 1, 1945. We didn't see him for over a year. Mama worried about him. She tried to write regularly by asking me to "please sit down and write a few words to Bernie". We sat at the kitchen table while she figured out what she wanted to say. Then I wrote it out on small pieces of stationery. I recall Bernie writing back that he couldn't differentiate between a Filipino and a Japanese prisoner, but the Filipinos, he said, had no problem at all recognizing the Japanese. Bernie enjoyed his time in the Philippines. This may have been his happiest time.

## **8.7 DELIVERING NEWSPAPERS**

In October or November of 1944 I met a boy who told me that he had to quit his job delivering the Bronx Home News because his family was moving. I was looking for a way to make more money than I could in the drug stores, so I asked Mama if I take his job. I needed ten dollars to buy my papers in advance. Thereafter I would collect from the customers and pay for each week's papers in advance. Mama was equivocal, but finally agreed. Ten dollars was a lot of money to invest in me at that time.

I had to pick up the papers in the basement of an apartment building near Hunts Point Avenue. Then I had to carry them about two blocks to where my route started at the top of the Spofford Avenue hill. My customers lived in five story walkups and small homes around one large block. I had to deliver about 60 papers five days a week and Sunday morning.

Lifting 60 papers in the large format like the Washington Post, although each paper was not as thick as the Post, was very hard. Mama told me that she once spied on me to see how I was doing. She said that I could barely lift the weight and staggered the whole two blocks until I could start deliveries. She didn't interfere, and let me decide if it was too much. I was too stubborn to quit. I think it helped me build some strength for basketball.

When I got to the beginning of my route I counted out as many papers as I needed for the first two five-story buildings. Then I walked up the stairs of one building, putting the papers in the doorknobs of the apartments as I went along. ( I rolled each paper and stuffed the roll between the doorknob and the door jam.). At the top floor I went out on the roof and crossed over to the roof to the next building. (A common wall connected these buildings.) Then I went down that building delivering papers as I went. This roof crossing enabled me to deliver almost one third of my papers in the first four buildings and saved walking up every building. I left most of my papers on the ground floor of each building to avoid carrying the whole load all of the time. After the initial deliveries reduced the load, I carried the whole load the rest of the way. I never feared that anyone would steal the papers that I left at my ground floor drop points.

I kept records of my collections. I knew when each customer wanted to pay, and rang their bell only at that time. I also knew who my tippers were. I gave the tippers a paper in good condition, even when it was raining. I always had some pocket money from my collections that I could treat myself to a small blueberry pie after I had delivered the papers. I also had a lot of pennies to play pitch-pennies with friends who I met on my way home. We pitched pennies to a line on the sidewalk. The



penny that fell closest to the line won the other pennies. I won a lot of pennies because of my staying power.

The paper delivery income gave me a sense of independence. I never had to ask Mama for money. She never suggested that I contribute to the household with my earnings. I had to get up very early on Sunday morning to deliver the papers and be ready to go on hikes with the troop. I used my paper money to buy my scout stuff and to start a photography hobby. I kept the route until June of 1945.

### **8.8 THE 14-MILE HIKE**

By December of 1944 I was ready to tackle the First Class Scout requirement to complete a 14-mile hike. My friend Yossi Silverstein and I decided to hike from the New Jersey end of the Washington Bridge to the Alpine New Jersey ferry landing, which was seven miles. Then we planned to hike from the ferry landing through the Alpine scout camp on the “red dot trail” and back to the ferry landing. That would be seven more miles. Then we planned to take the ferry and public transportation home.

Our route planning was good but we underestimated the time it would take to walk the seven miles from the Washington Bridge to the Scout Camp. We also didn’t account for the short days of the winter. It was almost dusk when we arrived at the camp, which was our half-way mark. Nevertheless, we went into the camp. We soon lost sight of the red dots that we expected to see on the trees, and thus lost our direction in the darkened and snow covered forest of Alpine Scout Camp. After wandering through the pitch-black woods, we came to the top of a cliff where we saw lights in the distance. I remembered having looked at a map of New Jersey to see the location of Papa’s cemetery, and recalled that there were highlands east of Oradell. I assumed that we were on those highlands looking west toward the lights of Paramus and Oradell, and that Route 5 was some distance behind us. On that basis, we turned around. In about a half hour, after breaking through the thin ice covering a stream that we didn’t see in the dark, we soon stumbled out onto Route 5.

We didn’t know where we were along Route 5. It was pitch black. There were very few cars on the road because gas was rationed during the war. Soon some cars came but didn’t stop. We decided to stand in front of the next car until it stopped. It did. Some skiers returning from Bear Mountain loaded us into the already filled car. They took us back across the Washington Bridge. Once we got on a bus in the Bronx I noticed that Yossi’s ankles were bleeding. I had worn some sort of boots, but Yossi was in low cut shoes. Our feet were soaking wet. We had been walking in the woods over ice-crusted snow that broke through with each step. As Yossi’s feet broke through the icy crust, the crust cut his ankles. We got home late and exhausted. This was a memorable hike. It wasn’t the last time Yossi and I got lost together.

### **8.9 HEBREW SCHOOL-TROUBLE AT THE LITTLE SHUL**

By January 1945 I had a problem in Hebrew school. The principal at the “little shul” Hebrew school was an American whom we all liked. But my teacher was a gruff European man, much like the men at the minion, who maintained discipline by hitting kids with a ruler. I was always kibitzing with my friends. He hit me a couple of times. By the middle of the year I thought he was getting particularly hard on me. The next time he came to hit me I grabbed my books, stood up, and pushed



the desk chair across the floor at him to slow him down while I made my getaway. I went home, but didn't tell Mama.

That night the Hebrew teacher showed up at our door to talk to Mama. He told her I was a bad boy, etc. Mama listened but didn't say much. Then he made the mistake of telling Mama that he was going to "say Kaddish" for me. Mama decided right then that she didn't like him either. She had to find another Hebrew school for me.

## **8.10 PREPARING FOR MY BAR MITZVAH**

Mama didn't wait long to find a new teacher for me. He worked at the "temple" across the street from the little shul (Temple Beth Elohim.)

Years later Mama told me that she "just happened to be" walking on Faile Street when she heard the beautiful sound of a boy chanting a haftorah from the window on the top floor of the temple. She made up her mind right there that I should go to the temple.

I liked my new teacher. He was an American who also knew about sports and played basketball. This made him appear a normal person in comparison with my other Hebrew teachers who were aliens from another world. I went to his house for some of the lessons. He lived on Westchester avenue somewhere near James Monroe High School. I enjoyed the extra walk to see him. As the year progressed, my studies moved from Hebrew to learning a haftorah and preparation for a Bar Mitzvah.

One of the important things I learned in preparing for my bar mitzvah was how the reader would call me to the Torah. Mama told me my Hebrew name and Papa's. She also told me not to forget that I was a Levi. Although Papa's tombstone clearly says that he was a Levi, the family had forgotten this fact (Even on the tombstone, it appears to have been inserted as an afterthought.) I became the keeper of the secret.

Fifteen years later, when Alan was born, we asked Meir's advice about a pidyon haben. After his lengthy explanation, he added that Cohens and Levis don't need to have one. Neither, he said, does a first son whose mother was a Levi. He was surprised when I told him that, according to that rule, we didn't need one for Alan because I was a Levi. He had forgotten that Papa's tombstone showed him as a Levi. Then he was puzzled that Bertha had had a pidyon haben for Howard when she didn't need one. ( There is a film clip of Howard's pidyon haben. Bertha was very sick at the time. She says that having company at that time was not pleasant.)

By the spring of 1945, when I was well into preparing for my bar mitzvah, Mama and I went to visit Martha and Meir in Hoboken. Mama told me to bring my haftorah and speech so Meir could check me out. As I recall, all went well until he heard my speech, which was one of those canned speeches that my teacher had probably taken out of a book. Meir tore up the speech and promptly sat down to write an "original", just for me. This impressed and pleased Mama.

Their Hoboken apartment was a long series of rooms with a large living room in front and a very small closet-like room in the back. Before I knew what was happening, Meir had locked me in this back room with his speech. His last words as he locked the door were, "I'll let you out when you



have memorized the speech”. It wasn’t a hard speech to memorize and it didn’t take me long. I remembered Mama’s admonition to “have respect” and didn’t say anything. Surprisingly, my teacher didn’t seem to question the change when I showed it to him.

**Meir** liked to take nightly walks along a path that went through a park along the shore of the river. He walked under the Stevens Institute overlook and continued on to the Hudson River ferries about a quarter mile beyond. Sometimes he took the ferry across the Hudson River to New York and back just to get the night air, get out of the house, or break whatever tensions bothered him. I went with him a couple of times.

(In 1993, after visiting Stevens, I walked the block where I remembered the synagogue being. The block now has a row of town houses, some of which are being converted to offices, etc. as Hoboken is becoming gentrified. I couldn’t tell which one might have been the synagogue. Since none of the buildings are recently built, the synagogue must have been a converted town house.)

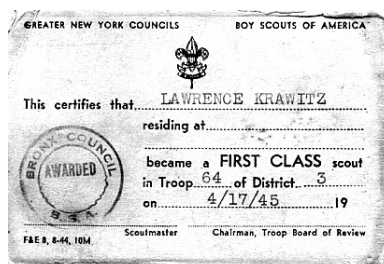


**Martha and Renah in Hoboken**

Another memory from this visit was my fear that I might have hurt Renah. She was then about eight months old. Martha had put her in the living room in a playpen. I thought I could get her to stand up by pulling on her arms. When I pulled on her arms she started to scream loudly so I put her down. When she wouldn’t stop screaming I thought I might have pulled her arms out of their sockets. I didn’t say anything to anyone. After a while Martha came and picked her up. I felt relieved when she stopped screaming.

## 8.11 THE DAY ROOSEVELT DIED

My newspaper route left me with a clear memory of April 12, 1945, the day that President Roosevelt died. The newspaper delivery man always left me a few extra papers to compensate for torn papers or smeared papers that might be down in my stack. I usually saved these extra papers until the end of my route, until after I had bought my blueberry pie, when I headed toward home. Along this way I passed the buildings at Spofford Avenue and Manida Street that were at the beginning of my route, since my route went into a loop. There were usually some older people sitting in chairs in front of the building and occasionally they would want to buy a paper from me. When I saw them at the start of my route I usually told them that I would sell them my extras when I came back. On the day that Roosevelt died, the Bronx Home News had a headline with bold four inch letters saying “Roosevelt Dead”. When I came to these people at the front end of my route they were all crying. They begged me for papers then and there. I think I changed my rule and sold a couple, but the sight of them crying there on the sidewalk, and begging me for a paper, always stayed in my memory. It was the day that Roosevelt died.

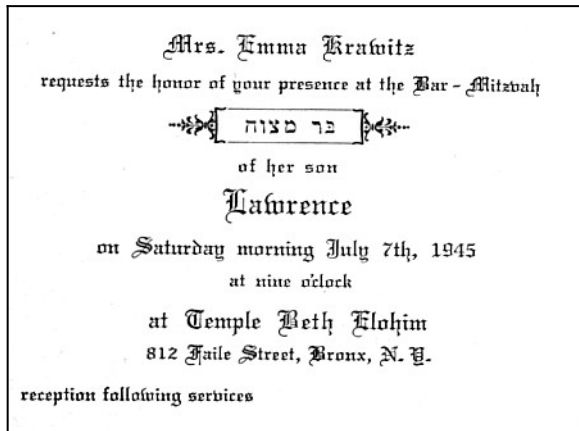


I was very active in the Boy Scouts during this period and completed my First Class requirements in April 1945..



## 8.12 MY BAR MITZVAH-July 1945

I celebrated my Bar Mitzvah on July 7, 1945 at Temple Beth Elohim. I don't recall the haftorah.

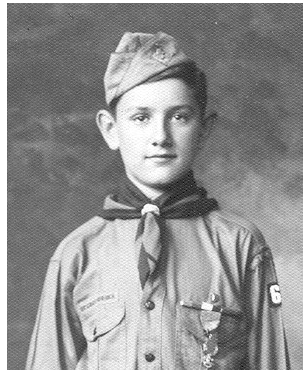


Mama had invitations printed, but I don't know whom she sent them to. Bertha and Si and Mama were the only family present. Uncle Morris didn't come. He sent my only gift, a shirt that was already too small.

The "reception following services" consisted of some wine and cakes that Mama brought. That was it.

We were all so worn out from Saturday morning in synagogue that we slept away the whole afternoon.

Bertha and Si came from Far Rockaway on Friday night. They slept in our apartment on the same sofa that Si had crashed some six years earlier in Burnett Place.



One of my Bar Mitzvah pictures shows me in a Scout Uniform with a First Class Badge. Mama surprised me by ordering that a picture. I thought she was still ambivalent about the Boy Scouts.

## 8.13 CAMP RANAQUA AND THE ATOMIC BOMB-August 1945

Our troop collected enough newspapers during the winter of 1944-1945 to pay for us all to go back to Camp Ranaqua for the first two weeks of August 1945.

I can only recall one incident from camp that year. That was my hike through the woods with Yossi Silverstein. Yossi and I had always joked about having gotten lost at Alpine the previous last winter and that we had incorrectly claimed full credit for an abbreviated 14 mile hike. So we decided to repeat our 14-mile hike as one of our activities. This time we started out early and, it being summer, we were sure the day would be long enough. The hiking counselor told us how to follow the trail markings and we were sure "we couldn't miss it." Soon, however, the trails forked, and some trails had become overgrown, and it was clear that the people who gave us the instructions hadn't been this way in a while. We had gotten lost again.

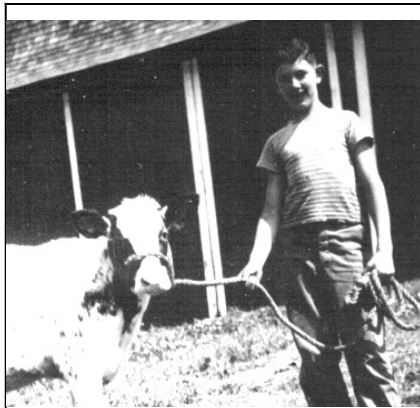


It was a nice day, so we weren't concerned. We followed the most promising path and soon found our way out to a road where we saw some cows grazing behind a fence in a field. Somehow the sight of cows stimulated Yossi to urinate at edge of the field in the weeds near the cows. Suddenly he screamed and leaped back in pain. When I ran over to see what had happened, I saw that Yossi had urinated on the electric fence. Just as the flame had run up the stream of lighter fluid, the electric current had run up the stream of urine giving Yossi a painful shock in a sensitive place. Yossi limped a bit as we continued walking. We decided to try to hitch a ride if we saw a car coming.

Soon a lady drove along, saw two boys in scout uniforms, and picked us up. After we told her we were lost, she told us how nice it was to be able to drive around again now that the war and gas rationing were over. This was how I learned that the World War II was over. The US had dropped the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945. Our hike must have been on August 11. We were at camp for the first two weeks of August.

I completed the Merit Badge Requirements for Star Scout that summer. Once I started high school, I lost interest in Scouting and lost track of Yossi. I never learned whether the shock of the electric fence had any lasting effects.

#### **8.12 I VISITED JOE ON THE FARM -August 1945**

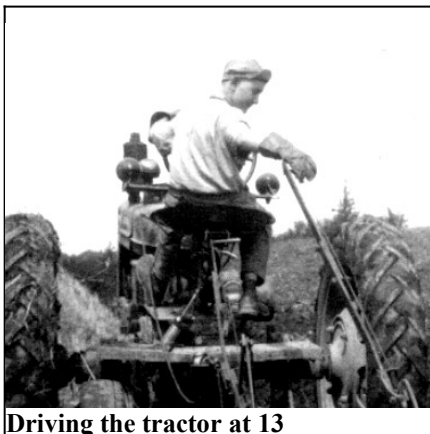


**Holding a Tame Calf**

About a week before Labor Day, I went to visit Joe on the farm where he worked in King Ferry, New York. Joe met me at the Ithaca, NY bus station with his car, a Model A Ford. Then we drove the 20 miles north to King Ferry.

I must have looked like a mop with legs because he took me directly to the town barber before presenting me to my hosts. Twelve years later I did the same thing to Howard and Zvi. I was more ruthless. I told the barber at Wright Patterson Air Force Base to give them skinheads.

We then went to the farm where Joe worked to meet the farmer, Slats Mahaney, and his wife. They were a nice childless couple. I slept in Joe's room in the farmhouse. The water supply was from a hand-pumped well under the kitchen sink. The toilet was outside. Wet garbage was disposed of in the pigpen near the house.



**Driving the tractor at 13**

The farmer let me drive the Farmall tractor. When they needed something back at the house or at the barn, they sent me. I felt very important when I had this chance to drive.

I recall riding on the drawbar of the tractor while Joe plowed the fields. Every time he came to the end of a row, he lifted the plow by pulling a rope. And every time he jerked the rope, he hit me in the head. I kept moving to avoid being hit, but couldn't find a good spot. Finally I just crouched down low.



Mama called one night. She was very upset because I was not going to be home for the holidays. This was a surprise to both Joe and me because Mama never before talked about the holidays. Mama insisted that I get home right away. Joe couldn't race his Model T fast enough for me to make the next bus from Ithaca to New York City. So he borrowed the farmer's pick up truck and raced to Ithaca at 70 miles an hour, which was fast for both those roads and that truck. I was excited. I thought we were flying. But Joe was sweating. We made the bus, but not by much.

I attended the holiday services at the temple. Mama had bought seats near the front. She was pleased when I was asked to hold the Torahs before they were returned to the ark. Men went outside to smoke and to learn the score of the World Series.

### **8.15 CHOOSING A HIGH SCHOOL**

We had to apply for admission to a high school in October of 1945. New York City offered a wide choice of vocational, commercial, music and arts specialty schools. For a general academic program, there was James Monroe, where the others had gone. Then there were the two elite college prep schools, Bronx High School of Science and Stuyvesant High School. I didn't know what I would learn at a "science" school. I knew that I had to study something that would lead to earning money. I also observed that the boys who were the goody goodies talked about going to Bronx Science, as it was called. Partly to be different from my brothers and sisters and from most of the people in the class who defaulted to Monroe without thinking, I thought I should apply to either Science or Stuyvesant. Although I knew that the teachers did not have a high opinion of me, I thought I was smarter than most of their pets who they were encouraging to apply to Science.

My choice of Stuyvesant was based on my sense that I would learn more practical things at Stuyvesant, like radio and electronics, than at Science. I was fascinated by the pictures in Si's electronics magazines. I had spent hours on the lower west side of Manhattan, wandering through the electronics stalls on Cortland and Lafayette Streets, looking at all kinds of electronic parts and radios salvaged from war surplus materials. I searched for something that I could build and understand. Finally I settled on a galena crystal and a set of earphones. This was all I could afford and, in the limited space of our apartment, was all I could build and store. Si told me that he had built a cat's whisker radio in the late 20's, and listened to it regularly. If he could do it, then I thought that I could do it. But try as I could, I never got mine to work. Sometimes, if I listened really hard, I thought I heard something. I tried several cats whiskers and followed the instructions in Si's magazine, but I never got it working. This was a mystery that frustrated me.

I never brought my little set to Si to look at, but I talked to him about it. He wasn't able to talk me through my problem. He did tell me that if I really wanted to understand radio, I should become an electrical engineer. He also put the notion in my head that if I wanted to be an engineer, I should go to Stuyvesant High School. Si's suggestion of Stuyvesant, and the teacher's pets' preference for Science, led me to lean toward Stuyvesant.

I didn't always accept what Si told me at face value. Mama's assessment of him made me cautious. Unlike Meir, Mama didn't consider Si an educated man because he didn't go to college. I liked the photography that Si taught me, but I couldn't see myself spending my time in a darkroom doing what was repetitive work. I wasn't mystified by photography like I was mystified by radio. Si also tried to interest me in stamp collecting. I got the books and sent away for stamps on approval and



tried to match them in my little catalog. Nothing matched. I felt like a dummy sitting inside on a nice day puzzling over some old worthless stamps. I gave this up. So I knew that I didn't share all of Si's values. But the idea of engineering stuck with me. That meant Stuyvesant. I applied for Stuyvesant with Monroe as the fall back in case I didn't pass the Stuyvesant admission test.

(Many years later I thought of how I couldn't make a cat's whisker radio work in 1944-45 and how Si couldn't explain it to me the way he could explain photography. At about that time some scientists at Bell Labs were completing a study of the cat's whisker device, technically a metal-semiconductor contact. They had started their research in 1939 to understand these devices that radar receivers needed. By 1945 they fully understood this device and were about to demonstrate the first operation of the cat's whisker as a point contact transistor. They announced the transistor in 1946. Shockley and Bardeen won a Nobel prize for understanding the cat's whisker. It was the beginning of the semiconductor industry that revolutionized the world. There was no way I could have understood what I was doing, or why I failed. I didn't understand this stuff until graduate school.)

Mama and I never talked about what high school I should go to. I knew her career views for me. She thought that I should prepare to work in a retail business like the ones that were "prospering" on Hunts Point Avenue. She knew some of the storeowners and "maybe if she talked to them they would take me in". She was all for education, however, but any importance she gave to college was based on just some vague notion. Her basic view was that it was good to be in business for yourself so others can't take advantage of you. Her second choice was accounting. She knew that people studied accounting at City College at night while holding a job in the day and living at home. She had friends whose sons were in accounting and "did very well". I too had seen the stores on Hunts Point Avenue, a couple from the inside, and they looked too precarious to me. What Mama saw as the independence of a storekeeper, I saw as insecurity. Alan Schwartz's father was an accountant. He was a dullard. Si's radio magazines told stories that fascinated me. I knew that I had to pass an entrance exam to get into Stuyvesant. I wasn't sure I was good enough.

## **8.16 MY ENTRANCE EXAM FOR STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL**

In November of 1945, with the war ended, the Navy held an exhibition of the ships of the Atlantic Fleet in the Hudson River. The newspapers showed that an aircraft carrier, a battleship, several destroyers and cruisers, etc. would be lined up in the middle of the Hudson River from about 42nd street to the George Washington Bridge. Alan Schwartz and I decided to spend a day walking the shore of the Hudson River taking pictures. I was in the middle of my photography phase. At that point I was developing film by holding the ends in two film clips and manually sliding the film through the pan of developer solution. I couldn't afford to splurge on a developing tank. I enlarged my pictures in Si's (toilet) darkroom.



**The Battleship Missouri in the Hudson River**

Alan and I spent the day walking up the west side of Manhattan, across the George Washington Bridge to New Jersey, and down the Jersey side to get better shots. Alan dressed warmly for the early November day. I dressed lightly and was constantly shivering. When I got home I found that I had the flu. I was bedridden for about two weeks.



During this illness Mama called a doctor to the house for only the second time in my memory. The other time was when I had a bad case of poison ivy. This same doctor was a “refugee” whom Mama found, I think, through Meir. On this occasion he arrived in the house in the late afternoon, took one look at me and then whispered something to Mama. I asked Mama what he said. She told me that he asked if he could pray in the house before examining me. Later Mama explained that he wasn’t praying for me, it was just his afternoon prayers for himself. I had to wait until he finished his prayers.

After two weeks in bed, I felt well enough to go outside. I found that I was too dizzy to walk, couldn’t maintain my balance, and tired after only a few steps. This was a very strange experience. When I returned to school, I learned that I had missed the entrance exam for Stuyvesant High School. My teacher didn’t seem to care.

I knew what I had to do. I went to a pay phone, since we didn’t have a phone in the house, looked up the number of Stuyvesant, and called the Principal’s office. I told whoever answered how I had been sick on the day of the exam and asked for an appointment for a make up exam. On the appointed day, I took the subway downtown and found the school.

I took the exam in a room outside of Mr. Schoenfeld’s office on a large yellow oak conference size table. The woman who took my completed exam into the next room left me sitting there wondering what I should do next. She returned in about five minutes to tell me that I had passed. I think she gave me a note to my school. I don’t remember because I was floating. Stuyvesant was so much bigger than PS 48, the halls were wider and some of the boys even needed shaves.

When I reported my success to my teacher at PS 48, she launched into the kind of gooey praise that she usually reserved for some of her pets, like Mosky. I think this was Miss Shea, the same one who had bawled me out for walking across her paper seven years before when I was trying to get Bernie’s homework assignment. Now she was telling the class about my initiative and how proud she was of me. I couldn’t believe it. I concluded that the principals and teachers probably earned credits in someone’s scorecard based on the number of students that they placed in Stuyvesant and Science.

### **8.17 SPORTS AT THE PLAYGROUND**

I spent most of my free time on the basketball court at the PS 48 playground. This playground was built into the side of the hill just below the school. A chain link fence surrounded the playground. Berk (Sid Berkowitz) was the recreation director. Pop, a little Italian man, did the maintenance and opened and closed the big front gate. Berk kept the basketball, paddle tennis equipment, chess and checker sets, etc. in a little house on the upper level. There were lots of benches where people could sit and play board games or watch the toddlers play. All of this was on the upper level of the playground. A ramp connected to a lower level where handball courts, a paddle tennis court, a punch ball diamond, and in the middle, the basketball court was located.

Once we started to play basketball, Mosky’s tyranny ended. There was no place for short kids, or big fat kids. Fortunately for me I was tall, gangly, and only a bit slower than some of the others. In a couple of years I was as fast on the court as any of them and central to our team. The days of the Hawks were over. Now we were the Hunts Point Dukes. I was no longer the “new kid in the neighborhood”, I was the center on the basketball team. I had finally made the transition from Burnett Place to full citizenship in Hunts Point.



We entered ourselves in tournaments sponsored by the Parks Department. Our “uniform” was an eclectic mix of sneakers, T-shirts and bathing suits. The other teams came in designer sweatsuit uniforms, with matching shirts and shorts. Their shirts even had numbers on them. They had an adult coach and went into their warm up drill with two basketballs. Their appearance intimidated us. We borrowed the game ball for warm up, since none of us owned a ball. But, once the game started, we usually found that they couldn’t play basketball. When we got into high school, we entered the Dukes in an evening basketball league. Either the economics of our families improved, or we earned money ourselves. We got Duke uniforms too, but never sweatsuits.



**Some of our baseball team (l to r):  
Gerry Schein, Barry Silverstein,  
Yossy Silverstein, Reuben Ungar,  
Harvey Kessler, Morty Lewin**

We also played baseball. I started playing the outfield because that was my stickball position. Our “field” was a wide-open lot down by the river, where there were no buildings to field balls off of. Since we were just little kids, who couldn’t hit the ball very far, the outfield

became a boring position. I volunteered to be the catcher when our catcher got hit in the face with a foul tip and had to quit. Like my predecessor, I had no mask. I borrowed his catcher’s mitt, since I also had no glove. I found that I liked catching because I was in on every play and could see the whole field. I liked to throw out baserunners trying to steal. Soon that became my permanent position.

When I finally bought my own glove, I bought a general purpose fielder’s glove. Since I dreamed that I could play center field, I bought a glove was “signed” by my hero, Joe Dimaggio. Many years later Alan looked at the glove and asked “Who was Joe DiMaggio?” Then he took the glove out to play and lost it.

## **8.18 GRADUATION FROM PS 48-January 1946**

I graduated from PS 48 in January of 1946. When we took the class picture standing on the Spofford Avenue steps, I maneuvered myself to the position in the top row, fourth from the right. This was the identical position that first Joe and then Bernie had stood when they graduated from PS 48. To get into this position I had to switch places with Seymour Geer when the teachers weren’t looking. I then had to tilt my head to the side so that the picture wouldn’t show my black eye. I had been in a football game at the cemetery the previous weekend and someone hit my face under my eye. My whole face swelled up and my eye turned black. (None of us could afford a helmet. We were glad to have a ball.) Usually we just played association football, like two hand touch with blocking, in the street. This time we wanted to play the real thing, without any equipment.

My only memory of my graduation was that the speaker was the minister from the Protestant church across Spofford Avenue. When he finished his comments he became stuck to the floor of the stage. The stage had been varnished for the graduation and the varnish hadn’t fully dried. His last words were “I think I’m stuck”. Then he jerked his feet loose and crackled off the stage. We all laughed.



## 9 STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

### 9.1 FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL

I started at Stuyvesant in February of 1946.

Stuyvesant was located in downtown Manhattan, between 15th and 16th street, and between First and Second Avenues. One entrance to the school faced 15th St. and the other faced 16th St. the only outside space around the school was in the two streets.



**Stuyvesant High School, Fifteenth Street Entrance. The school relocated to a new building in the 1970's.**

The trip from home to Stuyvesant took about 40 minutes. The subway ride from the Hunts Point station to 14<sup>th</sup> street took about thirty minutes and cost five cents (the same as it was in 1905. )

The walk from the 14<sup>th</sup> street subway to Stuyvesant Park, about a half block from the school, took about ten minutes.

Stuyvesant had morning and afternoon sessions. Juniors and seniors attended the morning session from 8:00am until 12:15pm without any break. Freshman and sophomores attended the afternoon session from 12:30pm until 5pm, also without any break for a meal.

The morning, until 12:30pm, became free time for all of the entering freshmen. Some of my classmates suggested that we see a morning show at a Times Square movie theater. The movie houses at Times Square had live stage shows, starting at am, that preceded each movie. One morning a group of us met at one of these theaters when it opened, saw a stage show and a movie, and then went to school. I remember the Master of Ceremonies opening the stage show by saying "Good morning ladies and gentlemen and all you hooky players." We laughed. Then we looked around the audience to see the "ladies and gentlemen". The entire audience was high school hooky players. I don't remember doing this more than once.

The freshman and sophomores who arrived before 12:30pm congregated in Stuyvesant Park. They joined drunken men, most of whom were asleep on the park benches with their whiskey bottles in paper bags. Then the police came, every day at about 12:15pm, to move the sleeping drunks from the park benches into the police paddy wagon. The same



cops came to clear the same drunks every day, it seemed, with the same humorous comments. After a while we knew the cops, the regular drunks, and the police humor.

The seniors and juniors impressed me as they left school when we were entering. They were big guys with five o'clock shadows, and serious looks on their faces. They carried a lot of books. I was only 5ft 9 inches and weighed 140 pounds. As they waded through the entering freshmen to leave the building, I felt very small. Four years later, after I had added five inches and twenty pounds and had become one of these unshaven seniors, the entering freshmen looked so small to me.

Morty Lewin and I usually traveled to school together. On warm days we went home on the elevated trains that went up Third Avenue. These trains had open platforms at the end of each car. Riding out there, and feeling the cool breeze, was a real treat. Another treat of this ride was the odor of the Ruppert Brewery around 60<sup>th</sup> street as we went past. The brewery's large, brightly polished; copper brewing vats were visible behind large plate glass windows. The grimy apartments in the four story tenements adjacent to the tracks were also visible from the train. (Mama never told me that she and Papa lived in one of these tenement apartments in about 1920.) We got off the train at the Simpson St. station on Westchester Ave., at the end of the commercial section of Southern Blvd. Then we walked home, looking in the store windows along Southern Boulevard as we walked.

Mama didn't see me in the morning. I was still sleeping when she went to work, since I didn't have to leave for school until about 11:30am.

## **9.2 MAMA FOUND JOBS FOR ME**

Mama looked for ways to fill what she thought was my excessive my free time. Soon she had a job lined up for me at a soda fountain/candy store on Hunts Point Avenue.

I washed glasses and did odd jobs in the evening between 8pm and 11pm. I still slept late in the morning when I should have been doing my homework. This was not a good situation. I quit after a short time, without much protest from Mama. Working in the evenings was not the way to fill my free time.

Soon, by accident, Mama found a morning job for me. She wanted me to electrify her foot-driven treadle sewing machine by adding an electric motor upgrade kit. So she took me along to the store that sold the electric motor upgrade kit. This store sold new and used sewing machines and vacuum cleaners as well as the upgrade kit that Mama was looking for. After looking at the upgrade, I told Mama that I could install it. The storeowner tried to persuade Mama to let him do the installation, but she didn't want to pay the installation cost. The man said, I think in jest, that "If he can put it on, I'll give him a job." I didn't have any problem mounting the motor and connecting the foot pedal control to the power line. It was much the same electric circuit as my buzzers. Mama held the man to his promise. He gave me a job in the mornings from 9am to 11:30am.

He had me refurbishing used vacuum cleaner brushes. This amounted to sanding and painting the brush's wooden parts with black enamel to make the wood look like new. The paint didn't, of course, renew the worn bristles, so the brushes still looked used. The



few customers who wandered into this store certainly weren't fooled by my paint job, and the brushes were never sold. I couldn't figure out what he needed me for. He came to the same conclusion after I worked there for two months. Then he told me that he couldn't afford me.

I remember telling Bertha about this job on the pay phone in the hallway of our building (we didn't have a phone in our apartment). I told her what I did, and concluded by saying that "this man must be really smart because he went to MIT for one year." I realized much later that he had probably flunked out.

### **9.3 BERNIE CAME HOME**

Bernie returned from the Philippines during my first semester in high school. His troopship left from the Philippines on 27 February 1946 and arrived in San Francisco on 31 March 1946. The one year he spent in the Philippines was probably the best year of his life. He returned healthy and tanned. He showed me some pictures of a Filipino girlfriend. He never mentioned her to Mama.

Forty-six years later, in 1991, Bernie underwent heart surgery at Beth Israel Hospital. Filipino nurses attended to him in the cardiac recovery area. When I told him that his nurses were native Filipinos, he began reminiscing with them about his time in the Philippines 46 years earlier. He even remembered several Filipino words. The nurses were only about 30 years old, but they knew of WW II. I think they gave Bernie some special care and attention after they learned that he had served their country. He also seemed pleased to be in their hands after he learned that they were native Filipinos.

The Army discharged Bernie on April 10, 1946, at Fort Dix, New Jersey. His discharge papers list his awards as the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, the Philippines Liberation Ribbon, and the World War II Victory Medal. He listed his prior civilian occupations as having "worked as a maintenance man doing painting, carpentry, cleaning and general repair work part time for 4 years, 1937 to 1941." This must have been at Burnett Place. He came home to our apartment on Manida Street and back to the twin bed right beside me.

Bernie kept his uniform and received a separation allowance. He was generous with both. He let me have his combat jacket and his army boots. These boots were ankle height at the laces and had a 2-inch high buckle belt stitched to the top of the boot. Bernie's serial number, 32-995-680, was branded into the leather strap. I treasured both of these items for a long time.

He used some of his separation allowance to buy us a television set. Television had come out right after the end of the war. The first sets had screens of about 10 inches across. The first TV owners set up their living rooms as theaters, and invited their friends to watch Ed Sullivan, Milton Berle, and boxing matches. Bernie took me with him to shop for the TV at the Davega store on Southern Boulevard. Davega was a sporting-goods store on Southern Boulevard. I always stopped to look in its windows every time we walked past. I dreamed of owning the bats and balls, footballs, golf clubs and tennis racquets I saw. I couldn't afford any of it, but I enjoyed looking. They started selling television sets when



television came out. Finally, with Bernie's money, I was a shopper at Davega. He bought a 14-inch Stromberg Carlson, and an antenna that we stuck out of the window. We set the television in our living room and watched all of the programs together. Mama was very happy to have Bernie back, and have us all together.

I asked Bernie why the Army had not promoted him beyond Private First Class after two and a half years. He told me that he learned two things in the Army. First, never volunteer for anything. And second, never assume responsibility for anything. According to Bernie, staying a Private First Class was the smart thing to do. I didn't understand why someone wouldn't want to be a Sergeant, or at least a Corporal.

Bernie was in excellent health when he came home from the Army. He was 22, brown from the tropical sun and very trim and muscular. He found a job at Chesman and Son, a cheese distributor, in its warehouse on the lower west side. I think he cut large cheese blocks into smaller ones for distribution. He smelled like cheese when he came home. He worked at Chesman for over ten years with very little advancement. This frustrated both him and Mama.

Bernie, for lack of anything to do on weekends, sat in the soft living room chair for hours reading the entire newspaper from front to back (I used to joke that he was trying to read the type off of the newspaper.) He often complained that he had a headache and sat there with his head in his hands for a long time. Mama hocked that he "should go out and meet people", but it wasn't easy for Bernie. I never understood why. I think that he tried to go out and meet people, but it didn't work. I wasn't helpful. I went about my own activities in school and sports.

#### **9.4 THE END OF MY SCOUTING ACTIVITY**

My Boy Scout involvement ended after I entered high school. By April 1946 I had collected enough merit badges that I became a Life Scout. I also became the patrol leader of the Panther Patrol after Alan Schwartz entered high school and dropped out of the troop.

By then, two years after founding our troop, Bernie Berkowitz, the founding scoutmaster, seemed to tire out. There wasn't any back-up leadership to take his place. I was in high school and my interest was waning. I dropped out. I think the troop folded soon afterward.

#### **9.5 MY FIRST SEMESTER OF HIGH SCHOOL- SPRING 1946**

My first semester at Stuyvesant had two memorable highlights, one in my music class and the other in my science class.

A man spoke to our music class during the second week of school. He offered any of us a chance to learn a musical instrument instead of taking the music class. Morty and I looked at each other and, being equally bored with this music class, raised our hands. He took us to the band room where he offered us a choice between two instruments, a flute and a bassoon. Neither of us had any idea what these instruments did or could do.



Somehow, either because I was taller than Morty, or we flipped a coin, he got the flute and I got the bassoon. It was our choice, without any contention. We then had to get our parents' commitment to pay a small amount for a music lesson. Whatever the cost was worth getting out of that dumb class. Mama gladly agreed. She had previously, on several occasions, asked if I wanted music lessons, and I had always declined.

I took bassoon lessons all of that semester, but couldn't get myself to practice. Morty practiced diligently and enjoyed the flute. He easily carried the flute along with his books in the subway. I had to put the bassoon case on end and sit on it in the packed subway cars of the afternoon rush hour. Morty practiced in his own room where he sat in a chair, set up his music, and closed the door. I practiced on my bed, my most private place. I didn't realize this limitation until I was a sophomore in college, which was the first time I had my own room. My instrumental career ended at the end of that semester. Morty made music his lifelong avocation.

The second highlight occurred halfway through that first semester. My science teacher asked if anyone had an interest in attending a summer camp sponsored by the Audubon Society. I had always been interested in seeing new birds, so I raised my hand. To my surprise, I was the only one. I spent two weeks in the Berkshires at the Audubon Society's Camp Northrop during the summer of 1946.

## **9.6 SUMMER OF 1946- HOWARD WAS BORN**

**Howard** was born on July 6, 1946 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Far Rockaway.

Mama and I went to the hospital when Howard was born. She needed to see first hand that Bertha was receiving the proper care. Mama, as usual, never told me that Bertha suffered an arthritis attack when Howard was born. I didn't attend any ceremonial bris. Howard later had an unnecessary pidyon haben, probably while I was at camp. The pidyon haben is recorded on film.

Thirteen years later, Mama died in this Hospital. Bernie also had his cataract operations there. The police took him there to the ER on the several occasions when he panicked and dialed 911 in the middle of the night.

Within a few weeks after Howard's birth, Si went out of town on business. I stayed with Bertha to help out while Si was away. Si left a few feet of film in his movie camera for me to take movies of Howard.

That night, I set up the camera tripod at the foot of the bassinette. I wanted to capture Howard's facial expression when Bertha washed his head. As I prepared to start shooting, I felt a warm sensation running down my leg. I looked down and saw that Howard was sending a long arching stream of urine over the edge of the bassinet onto my pants. I quickly recovered in time to take the movie, but I never forgot. Fifteen years later Alan returned the favor by soaking Howard while they were sitting in the front seat of my car parked behind the Gordon MacKay Laboratory at Harvard.

Camp Northrop had only about thirty campers, a director, and two nature counselors. These counselors went to the Fieldston School in the Riverdale section of Manhattan. I



was impressed by the way they talked and dressed, and how different their interests were than mine. They seemed to know about plays and theaters and concerts and places that I had read about in the paper. I had never before known anyone who went to these places. They took us on bird watching walks at 5:30am. I think this was my first experience with binoculars. I saw my first ruby throated hummingbirds and goldfinches in a swamp behind the washhouse at this camp. I also learned to identify the ovenbird by its sound. These counselors knew a lot more about bird identification than anyone I had known in the scouts. My bird list expanded greatly during those two weeks at Camp Northrop.

## **9.7 THE 1946-1947 SCHOOL YEAR**

### **9.7.1 FALL OF 1946- I BROKE MY LEG**

In the fall of 1946, the second semester of my freshman year, I broke my leg in Stuyvesant Park. This happened when, to pass time before school, we played Johnny-on-the-pony. This game involved two teams of 7 to 8 boys. One team, the “pony”, formed a human chain by each bending over and holding each other head to tail. The first member of the pony held onto a park bench to provide an anchor for the six-person human chain. The members of the other team, the “Johnny”, each took a running jump over the last member of the pony and tried to land and sit as far forward onto the pony as they could. When all of the “Johnnys” were sitting on the pony, the members of the pony shouted “Johnny on the pony” three times in unison. If they could hold the Johnny team that long, they would take turn being the Johnny, and the Johnny would become the pony.

I was in the middle of the human chain when a big fat kid, named David Hoffman, landed on me. Our team held for the three-count, but David Hoffman wouldn’t get off me. To get him off I stepped aside and tried to stand up. He rolled off onto my leg. I was in pain. My friends took me to the gym office for first aid, and then they took me across 16th street to the Beth Israel Hospital emergency room. X-rays showed a fracture.

The hospital couldn’t treat me without Mama’s permission. But I never knew where she worked. She changed jobs when her employer ran out of work. We had to wait from 12:30pm to about 6pm when Mama got home from work. The hospital had to call her on the third floor hall phone and hope that someone answered it. (Frequently, the people on the third floor got tired of hearing the phone ringing. They stopped the ringing by picking up the receiver and hanging it up again). Somehow the hospital reached Mama. She had to come all the way back downtown from the Bronx, after working all day downtown and getting home to the Bronx. When she arrived, they put me into a cast, issued some crutches, and told me I would be better in a month. Mama took us home to the Bronx in a cab. I didn’t think about it then, but it must have cost her a lot of money to pay for that cab ride.

My leg didn’t heal in a month. It took over two months. My leg itched terribly inside the cast. I was miserable. I couldn’t carry all of my books to school while walking on crutches. I got careless and didn’t keep up with my schoolwork. This was a mistake. My grades suffered.



Stuyvesant was a very competitive place. The school fostered the competition by giving each student his cumulative GPA and class ranking, starting at the end of the sophomore year. By then my freshman grades had pulled me far lower in the class ranking than I thought I deserved. My cumulative GPA never recovered. I never forgot this bad experience and the lesson that there are no second chances. I vowed it wouldn't happen again in college.

I had to revisit Beth Israel Hospital several times to get my ankle checked before the cast was removed. Mama decided that she would celebrate the removal of my cast by taking us out to dinner at a Second Avenue restaurant. As we walked down Second Avenue from the hospital on 16th Street, Mama pointed out some of the landmarks that she fondly remembered when, as a single girl, she lived and worked in this area. Two buildings had been Yiddish theaters, and another had housed a newspaper. She remembered the stores in some of the other buildings that dated from about the turn of the century. We ate in a fish restaurant on the west side of Second Avenue at about 12th street. I think we both had baked white fish and a boiled potato. This was the only time that I can remember Mama eating out for the treat of eating out. It was a totally new experience for me.

Forty years later I visited Beth Israel Hospital again. Bernie had entered Beth Israel Hospital for treatment of his Parkinson's Disease.

On my first visit to Bernie I walked through Stuyvesant Park to the same spot where I played Johnny on the Pony and broke my leg. The high school had moved to a new building along the Hudson River. The old building on 15th Street was being recycled. On a subsequent visit I retraced the path down Second Avenue from Beth Israel Hospital that Mama and I had walked to the fish restaurant. The fish restaurant was gone.

During Bernie's treatment for Parkinson's Disease, an investigation of his recurring chest pains led to the discovery that he had a severely diseased heart. This heart condition had been previously undiagnosed, although he had complained to his doctors about these pains for several years. A competent hospital physician finally discovered the origin of the pains and prescribed immediate heart surgery.

While Bernie was on the operating table being prepared for the operation, he suffered a heart attack. His heart actually stopped for a few minutes. The surgeons seized the moment to perform an open-heart surgery, and then restarted his heart. He survived the operation.

Within a few days after the surgery, his old smile and animated personality miraculously returned. He was like the Bernie I knew when he came home from the Army, long before his long slow debilitating and "stonefaced" decline from Parkinson's. I spent a half hour alone with him. He sat up in a wheelchair while we talked and joked back and forth. I left when he got tired. I thought I had witnessed a miracle in the revival of his old personality.

This moment of hope was short lived. He soon caught pneumonia and went into a relapse from which he never recovered.



During these visits I walked with Joe and Gigi a couple of times. Another time, I walked with Joe and Tom. Our destination was the Second Avenue Deli.

As I walked these streets in 1991, I remembered that Mama had selected this neighborhood for the one time that we ate out, so she could tell me of her fond memories of walking these same streets as a girl. I had my own fond memories of walking these streets to attend Stuyvesant in my most formative years. Bernie too had come here for his final chance to get relief from his disease.

### **9.7.2 SPRING OF 1947- MY JOB AT THE S.P.BROWN CO**

In the spring of 1947, the beginning of my sophomore year, my friend Herbert Dudack told me about a job he had gotten through the school's placement office. I knew about the placement office, but never tried to use it. Herbie had gotten a job as an office boy at S.P. Brown and Co. He introduced me to Mr Olarsch, and soon I was working there too. I started work at 9am, and left for school about 11:30am. The office was at 432 Park Avenue, near the 28th street station. I found it difficult to be on time, and was late more often than I was early.

S.P. Brown Co. ran the dry goods and houseware concessions at large department stores, mostly in the Pittsburgh area ( such as Kauffman's). The the accountants, the buyers for the stores, and a central fabric stockroom were in the New York office where I worked.

Mr. Sam Olarsch ran the accounting office. His assistant for general administration was Sadie Wilks, a single woman in her thirties. She always came to work in heavy makeup and in more fashionable clothes than the younger women. There were always rumors about Sadie and the buyers, or Sadie and some of the store managers when they came to town. Both Sadie and "Mr. Olarsch" treated the office boys like family. The assistant for accounting was Jack Dubinsky. He was Mama's kind of guy. He worked as a bookkeeper during the day and attended City College at night to get his degree. He never smiled, and was always officious. No small talk. All business. We didn't like him. People made fun of him behind his back. He was, unfortunately, in charge of scheduling the office boys.

My job included opening, sorting and distributing the incoming mail, and distributing the circulating paperwork between the twenty or so in/out boxes on the desks and the filing cabinets.

I also collected and reprocessed the Ediphone (after its inventor, Thomas Edison) cylinders. These were wax cylinders that recorded dictation. Each manager had a recording machine that rotated one of these wax cylinders while he spoke into a tube connected to a vibrating needle. The vibrating needle spiraled around the wax surface replicating the voice vibrations as modulated grooves in the wax. Each typist had a complementary playback machine. The typists machine rotated the cylinder while a needle sensed the modulation in the wax grooves and reproduced the speech in the typist's headphone. My job was to refresh the used cylinders. My machine rotated the cylinder while a small knife blade shaved the modulation grooves off of the surface, leaving a perfectly smooth refreshed surface ready for a new writing operation.



I also delivered deposits to banks and ran the copying machines. The copying technologies were the mimeograph machine and ditto machine. They were displaced by Xerography in about 1963. The mimeograph machine printed by transferring ink through a membrane that had previously been perforated by a typewriter. The ditto machine printed by transferring ink from a master that had been typed against an inked sheet. Just before the master contacted the white copy paper, solvent was rolled on to the paper. The solvent then dissolved the ink from the master as the paper and the master rolled into contact. The ditto machine was hand fed. I became very proficient at producing ditto copies at a high speed.

I figured out the relationship between the Park Avenue office and the department store concessions by reading the invoices as I filed them. I saw that the factories shipped the goods directly to stores in Uniontown, McKeesport, and Pittsburgh, and invoiced the New York office. The people in the New York Office marked up the prices of the goods from the invoices and sent the pricing instructions to the stores.

I also saw that Mr. S.P. Brown gave money to charities. I filed many solicitations in the charities file from the wide variety of charities that Mr Brown gave money to. This was my first awareness of how charitable causes depended on gifts. I assumed that such gifts would always come from rich people like Mr. Brown, and not from people like me.

The office had two other areas besides accounting/administration. One was the office of Mr. S.P. Brown and his son. Mr. Brown was about 60 to 70 years old. His son was probably about 40 years old. They both disappeared into their offices. Only Mr. Olarsch and their secretary went into their area. No one else would dare. It reminded me of the mystique of Mr. Loughran at PS 48. We wondered what they found to do in there all day.

The fabric stockroom was the other area on the S.P.Brown floor. Bolts of special fabric for special orders by the stores were kept here. The man who ran this area was a lightly colored man named Harley. He doubled as the keeper of the stockroom and driver to Mr. Brown. He picked Mr. Brown up in the Cadillac at the Central Park residence every morning. He used to tell us stories about how Mr. Brown ran in the park in his white sneakers before coming to work. His descriptions were hilarious and we all laughed together. We went to Harley's stockroom to escape from Jack. Jack never goofed off by wandering back there where he didn't belong.

I refer to Harley as being colored. During the 1940's and 50's, people of African ancestry referred to themselves as "colored" or as "Negroes", not as "black". Thus there is the National Association of Colored People (NAACP), Negro spirituals and the Negro Leagues in baseball. The description of these people as "blacks" started in the civil rights movement of the 1960's. I use the term "colored" to describe Harley here and later to describe some of my basketball friends because that was the way they described themselves.

S.P. Brown was my first contact with a business environment, where people with college training, mostly in accounting, had regular jobs and steady income. Their work appeared very routine, however, and I couldn't see how they could do the same thing day after day without getting bored. After I had worked there two years, I knew that their kind of life was not for me.



### 9.7.3 SPRING 1947- THE TRI-BORO MOTORS BASEBALL TEAM

In the spring of 1947, at the same time I was starting with S.P.Brown, Tri-Boro Motors, a Ford dealer on Whitlock Avenue across the street from the kosher butcher that Mama



suspected (see 1940) of spiking the hamburger, sponsored a baseball team to play in the American Legion League. I can't recall how I made contact with this team. I became their catcher. The dealer provided us with uniforms and all of the equipment needed to be a real team. I had spikes and a full catcher's gear. We played

with brand new balls straight out of the box instead of old ones with pocked surfaces and missing stitches. I learned what the major leaguers were doing when they "rubbed up" the new ball. We played most of our games at the Sound View Park. This was outside of Hunts Point across the Bronx River, but easily accessible by walking up Whitlock Avenue. I was still doing photography then. The pictures were processed by my primitive development scheme in the kitchen.

### 9.7.3 SPRING OF 1947- STUYVESANT

I found sophomore plane geometry very easy after the hard time I had with freshman algebra. I liked the proofs of plane geometry, and practiced to do the proofs as fast as possible. I discovered that the logic was easy see if I kept my equal signs aligned vertically. I didn't think of this as an achievement at the time. My teacher may have taught it that way. Later I found that intermediate algebra and advanced algebra were also easy when I kept the equal signs aligned. The aligned equal signs became my rule.

My first Regent's Exam was in plane geometry. The Regent's Exam is a New York State institution. All students in all schools take the same exam in a single subject at the same time. The exam comes to the school from the State Department of Education. The scores give a comparative rating to the schools, teachers and students. The teachers usually allowed two weeks to prepare for it. They always bemoaned the fact that they "had to stop teaching" to prepare us, because they "could have taught us so much more". We prepared by working the problems in Regents' Exam Review Books. These books contained the questions of previous exams, with the answers, so students could practice on their own. I found that I really learned the material by working all of the problems in these books. The teachers who thought we would learn more from them than from the exam preparation were wrong. I figured that they just didn't like the idea of being graded by the performance of their students.

Over thirty years later I remembered the lessons of plane geometry and the Regents' Exam preparation when I helped Steve prepare for his SAT's. I was shocked to see how little math he had learned in school. I remembered trying to



help him one time before. I backed off when he insisted that “my method” was different from that of his teachers. That was a mistake. Now he had to take the SAT exam, but knew almost no math. I put him on a Regent’s Exam prep course. He learned math in a two-week period by working all of the problems in a math book. He worked about fifty problems a day. I corrected them at night. He reworked the mistakes and worked the next chapter the next day. My biggest challenge was getting him to align his equal signs in a vertical column. Once he aligned his equal signs, his forward progress was remarkable, just as was mine years earlier. After this forced march, he did a respectable job on his SAT.

The Regents exam was designed to produce a statewide average grade of about 75. Not at Stuyvesant. The expected score among my friends was 100. If you made some dumb mistake, you got a sympathetic 95. We worried whether we answered a problem correctly, and agonized until we received the grades. We were competitive, but not against each other in this case.

I started taking Spanish in my sophomore year. I had never paid attention to English grammar because I thought it was unnecessary. Spanish required me to know all these grammatical terms. I also had never seen word endings like those used in Spanish. I had a very hard time memorizing the vocabulary. Later I picked it up and did well on the three-year regents' exam. The differences from English were a great shock at first.

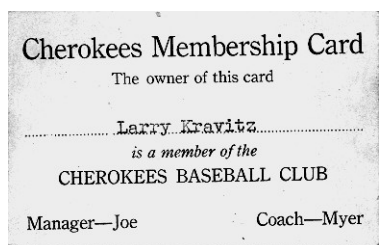
I worked at SP Brown during the summer of 1947 on a full time basis. The long summer evenings were hot and boring. I spent a lot of time playing blackjack and rummy with Bernie. He rarely won.

## 9.8 SPRING OF 1948

I couldn’t try out for the basketball team at Stuyvesant until I became a junior in February 1948. Then my school schedule shifted to the morning, from 8:00am to 12:30pm, leaving the afternoons free for basketball practice. Since this was the middle of the season, my first junior semester was spent playing on the “JV”. Making the basketball team became my objective.

When I started to play JV basketball in the afternoon, I arranged with Jack Dubinsky to take time off from SP Brown. He had a sufficient turnover of office boys that I could stop working and then start up again with a little notice.

### 9.8.1 THE CHEROKEE BASEBALL TEAM-SPRING 1948



Bert Segall, a classmate from Stuyvesant, asked me whether I was interested in playing for a baseball team that he was on. A man named Joe managed this team. It played in a parks department league. I attended a team meeting, went to a tryout, and made the team. This team was the Cherokees. They had uniforms and a full set of bats and catcher’s equipment that Joe brought to the games and practices. The team jacket was a silver and blue reversible jacket that I wore everywhere.



The Cherokees, like the Tri-Boro team, had one other player who could catch. Since I had a better throw to second base, they played him at third base. Most of the other players were relatively interchangeable. Once I became locked into catching, I had to catch batting practice and then warm up the pitcher.. I never got to take batting practice. Even the pitchers got more batting practice than I did. I had to get my hits by just trying to meet the ball. I never developed a really good swing. Aside from this issue, I have three memories of my time with the Cherokees.

Mama came to one of our games. We were playing at a field near Yankee Stadium. Neighborhood adults and children gathered to watch the game from behind the chain link backstop screen. As I picked up a tipped ball that had rolled to the screen, I came face to face with the people back there. The particular face I was looking straight at wasn't any stranger. It was Mama. She had her fingers through the chain link fence just like all of the kids, as she watched the game from behind me. After the inning was over, she said she just wanted to see what I did when I played baseball. She watched a while and then went home by herself. I didn't feel embarrassed, just surprised, that she was there. She never mentioned the catcher's equipment, or any danger in playing that position. This was the only time she saw me play baseball.

Bernie came to another game. We were playing at a high school field somewhere in the Bronx. Some spectators were watching from a small-uncovered grandstand behind third base. I was having a good game behind the plate. I had picked a runner off of first and thrown out another trying to steal second. I came to bat in about the sixth inning with two men on base and lined a long single to left center field, scoring the two runners. When I rounded first base I looked toward home to see if the throw from the outfield had been cut off. My eye caught something in the stands behind third base. There was Bernie, standing up with both arms raised in the air, cheering. He too wanted to see whether my teams played real baseball. He never mentioned wanting to come, and I don't remember telling him where we were playing. I was glad he was there to see me get that hit.

The third incident was the last game that I played with the Cherokees. Joe, our manager, had picked a pitcher for this game who he thought had a good curve ball. It actually was just a slow pitch that had a natural gravity induced drop. Joe ran this team as if he was in the majors. He put on spikes and a uniform for the games, and shouted orders while pacing the sidelines as if he was Casey Stencil. I think Joe was actually a truck driver. The pitcher was doing all right until he walked a batter. The other manager then sent out the steal signal. With the slow incoming pitch, the runner was almost to second before I got my hands on the ball. I threw the ball, when I should have held it, right into center field. Somehow, the runner didn't score that inning. In the next inning the same thing happened. The first batter walked and stole second base. Joe was yelling at me as if it was my fault. Then the runner tried to steal third. I anticipated the steal and had called for a fastball on the outside to the right-handed batter, so that I would have room to throw to third base. The pitcher ignored my sign and my mitt. He threw his slow ball inside. I could see the runner running while I waited for the ball to reach the plate. I watched the bat miss the pitch. By the time I got the ball, it was too late. My throw to third was late and in the dirt. Joe played his major league card and pulled me out of the game. I walked off of the field, put on my sneakers, and headed out of the dugout. Joe said, "Where do



you think you are going?" I replied, "I am going home. I quit." I sent in my uniform with Bert Segall, my friend from Stuyvesant.

### **9.8.2 WORLD EVENTS**

I was so engrossed in my own activities during high school that I didn't pay much attention to what was going on in the world. I knew we were in a cold war with Russia, and about the Berlin airlift. I don't remember knowing what was going on in Israel in the late 1940's.

Mama had joined the Temple sisterhood and attended some conferences dealing with Israel. She kept a picture of Eleanor Roosevelt, taken at one of those conferences, tilted against the mirror on her dresser. After one such conference she told me "Yiddish is a dead language. Now that we have Israel, all of our people should learn to speak Hebrew so that we could talk to the people in Israel." It hadn't occurred to me until then that Hebrew was a spoken language for communication. My Hebrew Schools had taught Hebrew only as the print in a prayerbook, and only to be "read", but not understood. By now I had studied Spanish and had some feeling for how a language should be taught. I thought Mama was right. I concluded that if I ever had kids I would see that they learned Hebrew with comprehension, not the way I learned it. They would need better schools than I had. (Later I learned that Mama always wanted her children to learn a second language so that they could communicate with other Jewish people. Then it was Yiddish, for Bertha and Martha to communicate with the family in Russia. In 1948, Mama thought it should be Hebrew, even though we had no family in Israel.)

The November 1948 election attracted my attention because of two issues. One was the fear of communism and the other was the Republicans' threat to regulate the unions. One of the newspapers identified, as "left wing" was a newspaper called PM. This "left wing" label worried me because I remembered seeing that newspaper in the house. I also thought that Bertha and Si read it. I didn't read it because it didn't have a sports section. Were we communists? Were we in some kind of danger? This threat soon passed when PM went out of business.

The trade union issue was even more worrisome. Mama was totally dependent on her trade union. When her employer ran out of work she went to the union to get another job. When she needed health care she went to the union clinic. When she was unemployed, the union provided her with income until she found another job. The Democrats claimed that the Republicans wanted to destroy the unions. What would happen to Mama and me if the Republicans won and they destroyed the unions? I was relieved when Truman won that election over Dewey. Afterward, the Republicans were able to pass the Taft Hartley bill in the next session. The bill did not harm the unions or make us suffer. I worried for nothing

One day Sadie Wilks, Mr. Olarsch's assistant at S.P. Brown, said to me, "It looks like we are going to war again". I didn't know what she was talking about. Then I found out that Truman was getting ready to send the army into Korea. I was really out of it.



### 9.8.3 PLAYGROUND BASKETBALL

I played a lot of basketball at the playground. The returning veterans made the playground difficult, however. They were all attending college during the week and



**Basketball at the playground**

dominated the court on the weekend. The Kor twins, Bill and Dick, had flown bombers in the same squadron over Germany. Their mother had asked the Army to keep them on different planes to reduce her risk, and the Army had complied. They were both great players. Dick later starred for NYU. "Stitch" Starkman served in the Navy and was also a great player, but too small for his LIU college team. They, and others, came down to the playground on Sunday, grabbed the ball from us, and kicked us off the court. They said that we had the court all week. It was their turn on

Sunday. We couldn't argue with the "vets".

We sat and watched them play as if we were at Madison Square Garden. Knowing that they grew up in our playground, we thought that we could be as good as them someday. They stopped coming to the playground by 1948. Then we dominated the basketball court. None of us became as good as they were.

## 9.9 FALL OF 1948-SPRING OF 1949

### 9.9.1 STUYVESANT BASKETBALL

I moved from the JV to the varsity in the Fall of 1949. The coach of the Stuyvesant basketball team was Samuel "Doc" Ellner, one of the chemistry teachers. He had coached the team for many years and was known as one of the outstanding coaches in the city. He seemed to have a lot of connections. He arranged scholarships for his best players at a number of colleges. He got us complementary tickets to Knick games at the Garden. He always had a "friend" who could make a court available to us for practice. He rarely had outstanding teams because his players had to pass an entrance exam to get into the school, and then he only had them for two years at most because of the dual session. Half of his players, like me, could only play for one full year.

In the '48-'49 season, Doc had the best team he ever had. Jack Molinas, the center, was 6ft 5 inches tall. Whitey Brandt and Stan Maratos were 6ft 4 inches tall. Joe Ciati was my height but about thirty pounds heavier. All of these people were not only tall, but also large and strong. Reggie Gould, one of our three colored players was shorter than me but could dunk with two hands. Stu Johnson, the other colored player was lightning fast and a



good shooter. Gary Mirsky and Artie Menaker were two fast guards. All but Mirsky and Menaker were seniors who were planning for college.

We never practiced in the Stuyvesant gym. The gym was a small rectangular room with a running track on a balcony about 20 feet over the gym floor. The gymnastics equipment was stored under the track in one corner. The basketball court was in the middle of the floor, with the baskets hung from the track. There was no room to run under the baskets. The afternoon session used the gym, so it wasn't available for the team.

We practiced either at the National Guard armory, on 34th St. and Lexington Avenue, or at the Madison Square Boys Club. Neither was convenient. The armory was freezing cold in the winter because the doors were always open for the National Guard trucks to come and go while we were practicing. The Boys' Club was hard to get to by subway.

We started our '48-'49 season by scrimmaging with other high schools. We always traveled to their courts, because we had none of our own. The two schools that I remember scrimmaging were De Witt Clinton and Abraham Lincoln. Each memory is different.

We traveled to Clinton by train. Clinton was a very large school on a grassy campus in the Bronx. Its student body, like the local population, had a reputation for being rough. Academic study was not their strong point. As we entered the gym, the other team and a few spectators looked at us and laughed, and called us "the brains". They threatened that if we made them look bad on the court they would get us later outside. Joe Ciatti was from Bensonhurst in Brooklyn and as tough as they were. He told me not to worry. I don't remember much about the scrimmage. The coaches kept it under control. There

were no after effects. In spite of Joe's assurance, I worried.



**The Stuyvesant team of the 1948-1949 season. I am the third from the left on top**

Abraham Lincoln was a different story. Lincoln was a coed school in the Coney Island section of Brooklyn. The gym had a grandstand at the gym level and a balcony with auditorium seats that sloped upward like a theater. About halfway through the scrimmage we noticed couples in the top row of the balcony, facing our bench, smooching away. Stuyvesant was an all-boys school. We couldn't believe this went on during school here. It

completely distracted our team. Doc was annoyed by his loss of our undivided attention. The couples in the balcony are all I remember about that scrimmage.



I don't remember many of the games individually. I didn't get to play much because Doc smelled a city championship and wanted to play his seniors full time. I played against these top players in practice, and considered that a privilege.

We played for the city championship in Madison Square Garden. The poor court quality surprised me. The floor consisted of 6 ft square interlocking sections. Each section gave the ball a different bounce. I warmed up with the team and may have gotten into a game or two for a short time. I don't remember. I do remember something that happened after one game, however.

We had won the game, changed, and were leaving the Garden, when whom do I see coming toward me in the crowd? Mama. She had come to the game to see me play. She had seen me warm up, but didn't see me play. She wanted to know why I spent so much time practicing, if the coach wouldn't put me into the game. I told her that the other players were seniors. My time would come.

Doc Ellner suffered a stroke at the end of that season. He retired and never coached or taught chemistry again.

Molinas, Brandt, and Maratos received scholarships to Columbia. Molinas went on to play professionally with the Fort Wayne Zollner Pistons, which later became the Detroit Pistons. He was an All-Pro player in 1956. Then the league barred him for betting on games. That stopped his playing but not his betting. He was always in debt to the bookies. First they broke his kneecaps for nonpayment. Then they killed him.

Stan Maratos, the player in the lower left position in the team photograph, crossed my path thirty two years later, in 1981. I'll tell about our meeting in Section 9.13.

#### **9.10 SUMMER OF 1949 - CAMP BOIBERICK**

Morty Lewin and his two sisters attended the Sholem Aleichem Folk Shul instead of Hebrew school. This was the educational branch of the Yiddish secularist Sholem Aleichem Society. The Folk Shul was around the corner from us, on Hunts Point Avenue, in a ground floor apartment. The objective of the Folk Shul was to teach Yiddish and Yiddish culture to children and adults. This was a secular substitute for the synagogue and religious Judaism. Mama joined the sisterhood of this Folk Shul after we moved to Manida Street. She never told me that she had sent Bertha and Masha there as children. (Bertha recalls that the teacher couldn't distinguish between Basha and Masha ( the Yiddish names for Bertha and Martha).

In the summer of 1948, while I worked at S.P.Brown, Morty worked at the Sholem Aleichem Society summer camp, Camp Boiberick. (Boiberick was the name of a mythical town in one of Sholem Aleichem's stories). When Morty came home from camp he told me that he had made over five hundred dollars that summer. He also received room and board, played a lot of basketball, and had a fun summer out of town. That sounded like something I wanted next summer. My summer at S.P. Brown had been boring.



In the spring of 1949, Morty recommended me to the camp office in downtown Manhattan. I went for an interview and received a job offer for the summer of 1949. When I told this to Mama she said that she knew already because she had used her influence in the Sholem Aleichem Sisterhood to get me the job.

Camp Boiberick was near Rhinebeck, New York, about 60 miles north of New York City along the Hudson River. It was both a summer camp for children and a hotel for adults. It was on a pretty site, on the side of a hill overlooking a lake. The kids' camp consisted of well-built and well-maintained cabins, with screens, on the side of the hill. The "hotel" consisted cabins at the base of the hill, on the same level as a dirt county road.

The entire camp was served by two dining rooms that fed off of one kitchen. The camp (350 kids) ate first in the camp dining room, and then the hotel guests (about 250) ate in the hotel dining room. This staggered meal schedule enabled the waiters in the camp dining room shift into busboys in the hotel dining room. In my first summer I was one of these busboy/waiters.

The chef ran the kitchen, but the salad man, the baker, and the dishwasher each had their own turf and their own rules for us to ignore at our peril. Morris (Moishe), a teacher from one of the city high schools, ran the hotel dining room

Each waiter's station in the hotel dining room consisted of three tables with a capacity of ten guests for each table. Morris assigned the guests to their tables assignments for their entire stay.

The hotel attracted people for weeklong stays, although many people came only for the weekend to visit children at the camp. The season started on Memorial Day Weekend, but just for three days. The summer started on July first and ran through Labor Day. The hotel filled up, or we hoped it would fill up, for the three long weekends, Memorial Day, July 4, and Labor Day. That is when we made most of our tips.

Since the camp was about an hour from the Bronx, most of the guests arrived by car. I became conscious of the wealth of the Boiberick clientele through their Cadillacs and their tipping, although some wealthy people were both very demanding and notorious stiff. When we saw known stiff driving into camp we hoped that Moishe would seat them at someone else's tables. I was a busboy at some interior tables the first year. The guests who Moishe sent there were not big tippers. I didn't make much money that year. The next year I had three window tables. Moishe sent all of the Sholem Aleichem activists, and the best tippers, to those tables. That was a good year.

Each waiter in the camp dining room served three tables of about ten campers and two counselors per table. About half of my income came from pooled tips from the campers at the end of the summer.

We started work at about 6:30am and worked until about 10am. Then we worked from 11:30am until about 2pm. We worked again from 5:30pm until about 9pm. After each meal we set the table for the next meal. We arrived about a half hour before each meal to



set out the bread, water, salads, etc. so the meals could start on time. The busboys finished the clean up of the kid's dining room after the adult meal was over.

I played basketball, tried to sleep, and swam at the lake between these meal times. We socialized at the dance hall in the evening. It was a full day.

Some of the dining room staff lived in rooms carved out of the crawl space under the administration building. I lived here during my first summer at Boiberick. Except for the screen doors, these places were dark, damp, and airless. They faced out onto the walk between the adult camp and the kids bunks up on the hill.

About thirty feet in front of my room the path crossed a small footbridge. When a polio epidemic hit New York, the camp built a double fence blocking the footbridge so visitors could see and shout to, but not touch, the campers. Parents tossed the packages of salami across this divide. The increased shouting made it impossible to rest during the weekends.

One of the ladies who came to visit her grandchild was a grand dame of the Sholem Aleichem organization. When she saw our living conditions she told the camp manager, Jack Brackarsh, that the quarters were not adequate for us. The next year Jack found us other quarters that were no better, just less visible.

The Yiddish benefit of Boiberick was largely for adults. Yiddish programs were held at the theater almost every night. A small dance band trio of a piano, a drummer, and a violin played conventional dance music and "Jewish" dances in a small dancehall. The campers had Yiddish "culture" studies during the day and observed Friday night by dressing in white for dinner. We covered the tables in white paper tablecloths and the campers sang special songs. The camp observed Tisha B'Av by an evening with no band or theater. In spite of the Yiddish emphasis, the campers showed little evidence of absorbing much of this Yiddish culture.

One night the Yiddish program at the theater didn't materialize. Somehow, I don't remember why, the Social Director asked me to perform by reading some funny one-liners in English. I agreed. The jokes were really bad, so I tried to improve on them with Jack Benny type pauses and other facial gimmicks. To my surprise, my performance was a big success. Guests stopped me a week later to tell me I should go into acting.



**At Camp Boiberick**

A large basketball court was located next to the road at the bottom of the hill below the dining hall. I spent most of my spare time on this court practicing my shots and playing. One of the waiters, Neil Simon, was on the Bethany College tennis team. He wanted to teach me to play tennis during the summer we were there together. I turned him down. I am sorry now.



The older people at the hotel liked to take a pre-breakfast morning walk down to the lake or down the road. Afterward, they gathered on the dining room porch where we served them their hot water and lemon, or whatever they needed until the dining room opened for breakfast. It was a very family-like environment.

During the summer of 1949 I saved almost \$500.

## **9.11 FALL OF 1949- MY LAST SEMESTER**

### **9.11.1 STUYVESANT BASKETBALL**

The basketball coaching position at Stuyvesant must have been a franchise of the chemistry department because Doc Ellner's replacement in the fall of 1949 was also a chemistry teacher. This man knew nothing about basketball. He showed up at the first fall practice of the '49-50 season with a book on how to play basketball. I could see that the season was going to be a total disaster. Fortunately I could play only in the fall semester. Because I skipped the second half of first grade, I graduated in January of 1950.



**The Stuyvesant team of the 1949-1950 season. I am at the lower right.**

While I was playing out my lame duck semester at Stuyvesant, without the coaching constraints of Doc Ellner, I changed the way I played basketball. Instead of being the passer to other people, I tried shooting more. I started doing this in the games with the Dukes. We were all high school seniors and had come a long way from our early years. I took over a good bit of the shooting and scoring from my guard/forward position. I drove to the basket more, and took jump shots. I enjoyed the game much more than before. This change proved to be

important when I went to college.

One of the colored players on the Stuyvesant team was George Maginley (at the lower left in the picture). George lived in Harlem. He and I became such good friends that George invited me to play on his team in Harlem. He met me at the subway station and walked me to the community center. The defensive players called me "whitey as we came down the court. I didn't need a number on my shirt. I stood out like a light bulb. The leaping ability of all of these guys amazed me. Then I invited George to play a couple of games in the Bronx with the Dukes. Our league hadn't had any colored players before George. Neither had the league seen a leaper like George.

I never expected any comments about George's color, and didn't hear any.



### 9.11.2 PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

All of the students at Stuyvesant were college oriented. A few of the students came from wealthy families in uptown Manhattan. They had maids, studied Latin, applied to Ivy League Colleges, and prepped for law or premed. Most of the students were like Morty and me, without college-educated parents, or any money, and had little idea of where they were heading. All they knew is that they were going to college.

By the time I had to think about college in 1949, Joe was my only source of guidance within the family. That was Joe. Mama also offered advice, but I knew I had to discount it because she had no real idea of alternative careers and how a high school kid should select a college.

Joe had attended the Cornell Agricultural School, a state supported college, starting in 1946. He had two friends in the New York area who he thought could advise me. One of these people gave the advice, by letter as I remember, that the best places for engineering were Cornell and Yale. I knew about Cornell from Joe, and Yale was where all of those rich kids wanted to go. I didn't think it was for me.

The second of Joe's contacts was more interesting. Joe arranged to take Morty and me to see this person. We arrived at his luxurious home out on Long Island by train. Neither Morty nor I had ever seen or set foot into such a place. Our host greeted us cordially and invited us into the dining room for dinner and discussion of college. So many forks, knives, spoons, water glasses and wine glasses filled the dining room table that neither Morty nor I could figure out how to choose the right way to eat. We had both worked as waiters at Boiberick, and had set dining room tables, but this was another world altogether. As the evening progressed we concentrated so much on watching our host for eating cues that we never really heard the advice he may have given. Years later Morty and I laughed over the thought of the two Manida Street kids having a fancy dinner at a Long Island estate. The scene could have been a movie plot. I never figured out what Joe thought we could accomplish there.

While I was looking for a college in the College Guide I kept a mental note of the tuition and typical living costs. I had no idea how I would pay for any of these colleges. I also don't recall ever talking with Mama about this. It seemed to be one of those subjects that we just avoided. Of course, she approached it obliquely by repeatedly advising that I would be better off going to City College, working days and going nights, and other low expense schemes. I knew, and accepted, that I was on my own financially.

I had two financial schemes in mind, neither of which worked out. The first scheme was to win a New York State Regents Scholarship. This was an award of about \$500/yr. that could be used at any school in New York State. Awards were based on special exam scores, with a certain number of awards given to each region. My score was high enough to have won in most of the upstate regions, but not high enough to win in the Bronx. So that was out.

The second scheme was to get a Navy ROTC scholarship. I had to get Mama's approval of this, and she reluctantly agreed. All went well until I flunked the eye test at the



physical exam. I thought that I had noticed some blurring of newsprint during that year, but never dreamed that I needed glasses. I had astigmatism. Navy ROTC was out too.

As it turned out, Morty had no college problem. He was valedictorian of our class and signal caller on the football team. He got a full scholarship to Princeton.

I was so confused about my college plans that I didn't mention college in my high school yearbook. The problem was money. I struggled with the financial tradeoffs.

Mama persisted that I should study accounting at City College at night and work in the day. Accounting was a "good field for a Jew". I could live at home to save money. She had no idea, and neither did I, of what a proper college study environment should be. She didn't know anything about engineering, how could she? Some of her friends told her it "was not a good field for a Jew".

If I really wanted to study engineering she thought I should go to Cooper Union. Cooper Union was near Stuyvesant and the 8th Street area where she lived and worked when she was a single girl. She told me that in those years she walked to work past Cooper Union, and thought that someday she might have a son who went there. I knew some people from Boiberick who went there. It was a good school. But I would have to live at home. It would just be an extension of Stuyvesant.

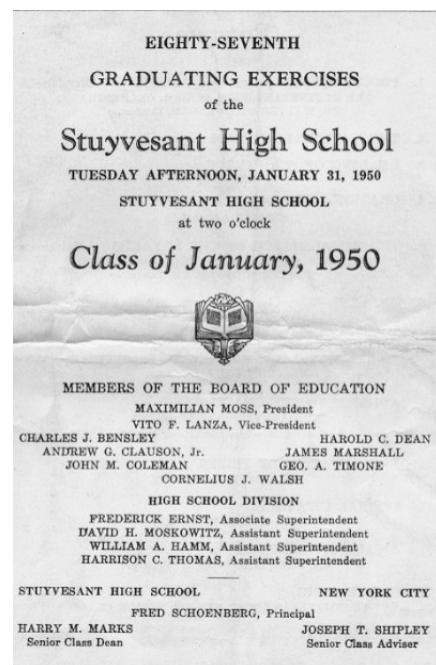
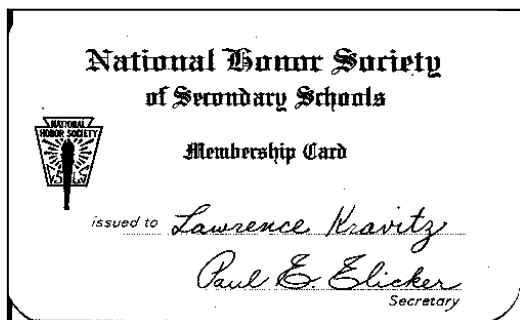
I applied to Cornell, with Cooper Union and City College as backups. I think Mama even reluctantly agreed, so long as I didn't depend on her for money, that maybe it would be best for me to get out of the city. Joe was at Cornell, so I wouldn't be alone. The Hunts Point neighborhood was starting to change in 1950.

### 9.11.3 GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL

My diploma shows that I was a science major at Stuyvesant. I don't remember any science that I learned there. My memories are of math, Spanish, and architectural drawing.

My grade point average never overcame the low grades of my freshman year when I broke my leg. I graduated in the top 25% of my class. These grades were good enough to qualify for Arista, but not nearly

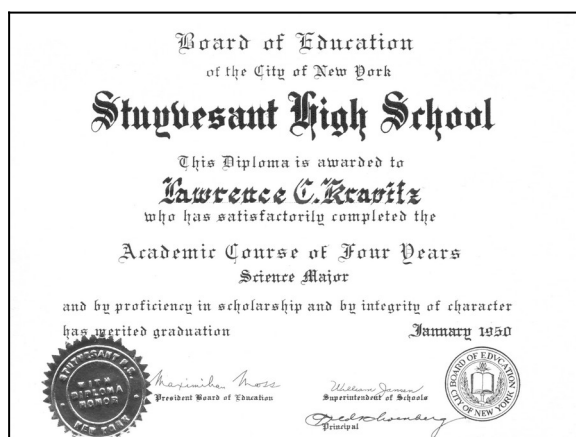
as good as they could have been.







I



was admitted to all three schools. Cornell offered me a freshman scholarship of \$700 credit against the tuition of \$1000. I decided to go to Cornell in the fall of 1950.

I asked George McGinley where he was going to college when he graduated in June. He said City College. When I acted surprised, he told me that colored people don't go to college outside of the city. This was my first personal contact with such discrimination. When I got to Cornell I found that George was right.

I planned to use my free spring semester to audit some courses at Stuyvesant in the morning while working part time in the afternoon. I enrolled in Solid Geometry, Basic Radio, and Elements of Radio. I was still trying to understand radio.

## 9.12 AFTER GRADUATION

I called Jack Dubinsky to arrange for starting work at S.P. Brown in the afternoons after graduation. He told me that they didn't need me there any more. I never knew what happened. I needed to find another job and save some money.

### 9.12.1 SPRING OF 1950-A JOB AT McCALL'S

The school employment office referred me to McCall's Magazine for a mailboy job. A retired Irish cop ran the mail operation. He hired me deliver the mail around the building. He acted gruff, but was really a nice guy. This place was different from S.P. Brown. Everything was more formal. People, especially the women, were a lot dressier. The place was quiet. I looked for the photography operation while delivering the mail on my route through the building, thinking I could find a way to transfer into that department.

A short dark haired fellow approached me one day. He introduced himself with some Jewish sounding name, and asked if I was Larry Kravitz. Then he cautiously asked me something in code that let me indicate that I was Jewish if I understood the code. When I acknowledged that, he asked me if I saw anything peculiar about McCall's. I didn't. Then he said, "Don't you notice that you and I are the only two Jews in the whole place?" I hadn't noticed. Then he said, "Be very careful".



I didn't have much contact with him after that, except to say hello in passing. He was right, however. There were no other Jews. I didn't feel uncomfortable, and everyone was nice to me, so I didn't understand his problem.

I worked at McCall's in the afternoon and audited my courses at Stuyvesant in the morning. I didn't take long to see that this wouldn't work. I didn't have the motivation to work the homework problems, or even attend class. I didn't have any friends in the class to discuss the work with, or kibitz. I felt like a fifth wheel around the school. I decided to drop the classes, find a full time job, and quit McCall's.

I started looking for a full-time job in the mornings before reporting to work at McCall's.

### **9.12.2 SPRING 1950- A JOB ON WALL STREET**

I began my job search at employment agencies. Very quickly I learned that most of the jobs they advertised didn't exist. The arrogant clerks at these agencies delighted in humiliating me with forms to fill out. It was a very depressing experience. I wondered how people who actually needed a job to support a family could maintain their sanity looking for a job through these agencies. I didn't need a job, and was only looking for a better one to make more money for college. I wasn't going to go hungry. I should have been able to tolerate the job agency hassle. It was so depressing that I gave up on the employment agencies.

I saw an ad for an office boy in the Wall Street area. This seemed to fit me. The ad specified interviews at 9am at an address near Wall Street. I congratulated myself when I arrived at the address at 8:59am. Then my heart sank when I opened the door and found the lobby filled with people holding the same newspaper ad. Some of these people dressed in suits and coats and looked like my high school teachers. I couldn't believe that these people were competing with me for this job. Although I was the last to arrive, I decided to wait and give it a try.

Promptly at 9am, responding to some signal, we all walked onto the elevator. As the last arrival, I was the last to get on. I found myself with my nose practically pinched by the elevator door as it closed. Then I realized how lucky I was to be the last to arrive. I was the first one to get off the elevator, and was the first one in line at the interview.

A woman with a European accent interviewed me. She asked me about my schooling and about my family. She seemed especially interested when I told her father had died when I was eleven, and that my mother worked in the garment industry. She told me to wait outside. After she interviewed three more people, she went out and told the crowd that she had filled the job. I was hired.

After I found this job, I told the gruff ex-cop who was my boss that I was leaving. He said he was sorry to see me go. He had some kind of promotion in mind for me. He said I had "executive bearing". I wondered what problems my Jewish friend had experienced.

The Wall Street firm exported pharmaceuticals to Europe under the Marshall Plan. I managed the stockroom, did a lot of errands to banks, and wrapped packages of



pharmaceuticals for shipment to Europe. I delivered a lot of parcels to the post office every night. Each parcel bore a large red stamp showing that the “People of the United States of America” had provided it. I went to many foreign banks to deliver executed the international fund transfer papers. I enjoyed going to the banks, but none of this financial stuff interested me at the time. I didn’t know anything about investments or foreign trade, and these topics were not ones I wanted to learn.

The people in this company, like the ones at S.P.Brown, didn’t seem at all excited about their work. Neither did the people in the banks. Since they all seemed bored, I didn’t think Wall Street provided very interesting work.

I never told my boss, the lady with the accent, that I intended to quit in June and go to college in the fall. When I did tell her, she seemed sorry to lose me. It meant a bother for her to fill the job again. I didn’t feel guilty. She never seemed interested to train me for something better than the stockroom and deliveries. She must have expected me to be a stock boy the rest of my life. I had learned all of that in my first few weeks.

When I went to Boiberick at the end of June in 1949, I left New York City as a resident for the last time.

### **9.13 I MET STAN MARATOS in 1981**

I remarked in Section 9.9.1 that I met Stan Maratos, my Stuyvesant teammate, in 1981.

I was, at that time, the Director of the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (OSR). This organization was a tenant on Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, DC. We had our own building with about 200 people equally divided between civilians and military. My Deputy Director was Colonel Bob Sigethy.

The base had a commander who was our landlord. He was responsible for the facilities. We, like all of the other tenants, took care of our own business. Base commanders were always being reassigned and new ones installed.

One day, when I returned from a meeting, my secretary reported that she had gone to the installation ceremony for the newly assigned base commander. She reported that he was a “very big man”.

The next day she showed me the picture of the new base commander in the base newspaper, The Bolling Beam. I saw that the big man was named Colonel Stanley Maratos. I recognized his picture.



I told my secretary that he may be Colonel Maratos to the Air Force, but to me he was “The Greek”. She was appalled that I would be so politically incorrect. Then I explained that I knew him in high school, where we called him “The Greek”. She was shocked. I don’t think she believed me.

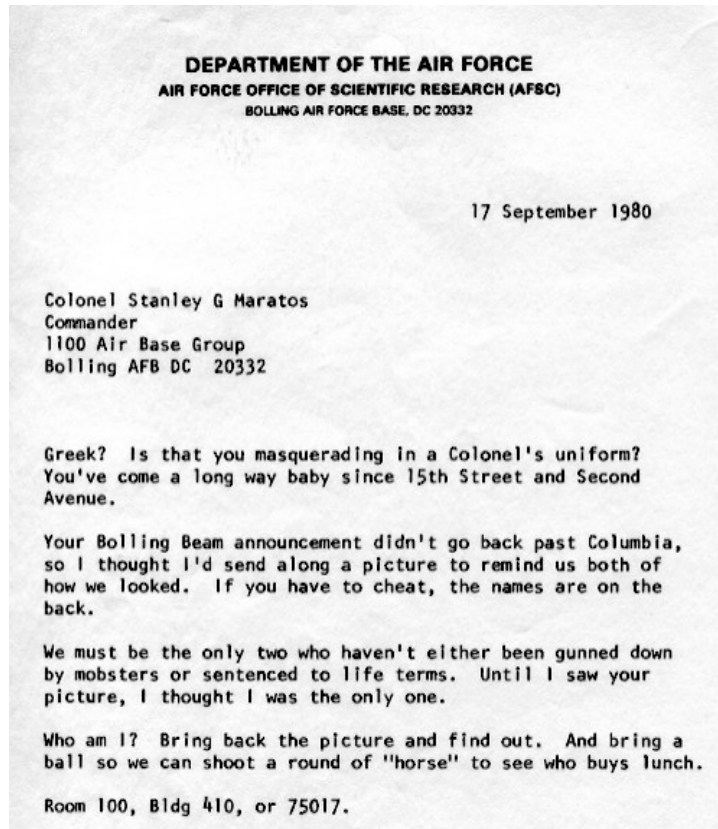
I decided to have some fun with Maratos. (I was a civilian with a protocol rank of a two-star general, higher than his rank of colonel...so I could have some fun.)

I sent him the unsigned letter, along with a copy of the team picture, to see if he could figure out which of his old teammates was lying in wait for him.

One of our airmen served as the messenger. He reported back that Maratos seemed a bit angry when he first read the letter, then he burst out laughing when he saw the picture.

When I left The Air Force in 1981, Stan accorded me the honor of a parade by the Air Force Marching Band and the Rifle and Drill Team.

Stan was later the scapegoat for some financial irregularities at the Officers’ Club. He retired from the Air Force.





## **10 CORNELL UNIVERSITY 1950-1951**

### **10.1 MONEY**

I needed money to attend Cornell. I had saved only \$500 from the previous summer and my work at S.P. Brown. I thought Cornell would cost more than that amount. How much more, I didn't know. Although the college guide books estimated the cost of room and board, these costs seemed high. Joe suggested ways to economize, but I didn't know if they were realistic. (They weren't.) As the summer began I didn't have a realistic financial plan for Cornell in the fall. I needed to save everything I made at Boiberick that summer. I didn't even dare to think of how I would afford the subsequent years of college.

### **10.2 SUMMER OF 1950- CAMP BOIBERICK**

Boiberick created a new dorm for the waiters that summer. It was in the attic above the administration offices. About a dozen of us slept up there. The uninsulated ceiling made the room hot during the day and cool at night. The only window opened high above the dirt road directly opposite the dance hall. Sleep was impossible until after the klezmer band quit at 10:30pm.

I rested during the day, between meals and basketball games. I found that I could induce sleep by closing my eyes and imagining that I was on the ceiling looking at myself lying in the bed. I fell asleep when I held this image for about a minute. It worked every time and was a great help in taking catnaps.

Most of the other waiters were already in college. The Garfinkle brothers went to Columbia. They were pretentiously academic. Bernie Schectman was a graduate student at Indiana. Neil Simon went to Bethany College. Both of these fellows played ball with us and were fun to be with, but clearly serious about college. Then there were Whitey Kozlosky, Danny Green, and Bernie Nassau, all of whom went to Oklahoma A&M. They were clearly less serious about college than the others. Whitey and Danny had been in the Navy and were the oldest waiters. Whitey was considered by all of the waiters to be an antisemite. He refused to acknowledge that he was Jewish, but insisted that he was Polish. He was intemperate and unpredictable. In spite of this, because Whitey had the best tables in the dining room, every busboy wanted to work for him. Danny always agreed with Whitey. He got the next best tables. Bernie Nassau went to college with them and had the next best tables. Bernie was Morty's friend from previous years and picked Morty as his busboy.

Bernie Schectman picked me as his busboy at the fourth best tables. Our tables were only about half full most of the time, and our guests weren't the biggest tippers. I think that I made a little over \$600 that summer.

After the Labor Day weekend I returned to Manida Street to pack my winter clothes. Then I left for Ithaca by Greyhound Bus from the terminal in downtown Manhattan. The



bus went out Route 17 in New Jersey, to the Delaware Water Gap, then north to Ithaca. I hoped that my money would last through the year.

### **10.3 LIVING IN ITHACA**

Joe had arranged a place for me to live in Ithaca. A friend of his had graduated and left a space in an apartment with three other students. The rent was modest and, since I could prepare my own meals, I expected that the cost of food would be low.

The apartment was in the garret of a frame house on University Avenue, a main uphill artery leading from the lower parts of the steep hillside up to the campus. Fraternity houses lined the lateral street on the block below us.

My three apartment mates were all engineers who were members of the AEPi fraternity. They chose to live out of the house in order to have the quiet place to study. Howie Multer and Herb Epstein shared the bedroom in the front of the house and had desks in the living room. Bob Rosenthal and I shared the back bedroom and had our desks in our room.

Howie Multer was the son of the congressman from Martha's district in Brooklyn. Herb Epstein's family lived in Lawrence, about a mile from Bertha, in a very large ranch house on a big lot. Herb had a car at school, an indicator of affluence in those days. Bob Rosenthal came from Long Island and was always commenting about how wealthy the Jews in America were. I listened in silent awe to their conversations about the affluence of the Long Island Jewish community.

We shared kitchen expenses by an honor system. Each person charged himself an amount for each item he consumed. The charge list was kept in the cupboard. Shopping expenditures were also listed. We expected the shopping expenditures to balance the usage charges, and they came close enough to keep everyone happy.

I thought that the way to shop was to buy the most for the least. Howie Multer thought that a better way to economize in shopping was to buy what people didn't like. That way they ate less of the food and saved money. When he shopped, that is what he did. We all joked about it.

I was the biggest user of the kitchen. I had breakfast and dinner there. They had breakfast in the apartment and dinners at the fraternity.

I had my own desk. This was the first time I ever had a desk to study at. I also had my own closet for my clothes. These were new experiences.

I really didn't know how to study. My desk was always pretty sloppy. I also piled my clothes on the bed instead of hanging them up. One time Bob Rosenthal got mad at my mess and threatened to throw my stuff out if I couldn't be neater.



#### **10.4 - FRESHMAN ENGINEERING- FALL OF 1950**

The EE freshmen orientation was held in a large lecture room in the Electrical Engineering Building. The professor told us to look a two people to our left and two people to our right. Of the five of us, he said, only three would get to the junior year and only two would graduate. He challenged us to decide if we would be one of the two to graduate. Later Herb told me that the statistics were true.

The freshman lectures in physics, chemistry, and calculus at Cornell were held in theatre sized halls. The physics lecture sometimes included demonstrations. In one memorable demonstration, the professor held a massive brass ball, suspended from the ceiling as a pendulum, up to his face. He then let the ball swing out and back on a trajectory to smash his face. We held our breaths as the ball reached its original height in front of his nose, expecting the ball to smash his face. But the ball stopped, sparing his face. This demonstrated Conservation of Energy, a law that has never been repealed. I had a hard time in these large classes when there were no demonstrations. I could hardly see the blackboard because I usually arrived just before class and had to take a distant seat.

One of the required classes was Casting, Working and Machining, of Metals. We poured molten metal, made forgings, ran lathes. I thought the class was worthless at the time, but it actually proved useful later in my career. The machining segment used lathes that dated from the last century. The 30 lathes in the machining lab were all driven by belts from a main driveshaft on the ceiling. The main driveshaft was originally driven by water power. By my time it had an electric motor. Pictures of such shops were used to show hazardous workplaces.

My biggest learning challenge was the first derivative in Calculus. I understood the mechanics of taking the first derivative of a polynomial, but I was uncertain about what it meant. I tried to get help from my roommates, but they couldn't see my problem. I concluded from these discussions that Herb was smart, but Rosenthal and Multer were just hanging on. This first derivative issue hounded me until about halfway through the semester. As I began to use the formulas, the problem just went away

#### **10.5 FRESHMAN BASKETBALL- FALL OF 1950**

I was interested in trying out for the freshman basketball team. My chance came when I saw a small notice of "tryouts" posted on the bulletin board at Barton Hall, the indoor arena.

About thirty five people came to the first tryout. The freshman assistant coach, Tom Turner, began by calling the names of about a dozen people he already had listed on his clipboard. He told them to start shooting around on the main court. Then he entered the names of the rest of us on his clipboard. We were told to shoot around on the second court. I wondered how he got the names of the first group before the "tryout".

He watched people shoot for a while, then put both groups into a layup drill. After a time he started two five-on-five games on the two courts. After watching us hack each other up



while trying to show our best, he called out a list of people that he wanted to come back the next day. All of the first dozen were invited back. Only about half of the second court people were invited back. I was among them.

The squad was pruned down to about twenty players. During this pruning I noticed that the freshman coach and the varsity coach interacted with the initially favored players as if they had known them before. They inquired about whether their rooms were adequate and whether the dorm food was acceptable. I slowly learned how the system worked. Those clipboard players were on alumni scholarships. The rest of us were “walk-ons.”

The sponsored players were all sponsored by Cornell Alumni Association chapters. Dick Coddington was sponsored by the Cornell club of Columbus Ohio. Bill Bradley, at 6-8 was sponsored by the New Jersey Alumni Club. Wendell McFee and Bill Rathje were from the Long Island Club, and Peter Paris and Lee Morton were sponsored by the club of Rochester NY. Don Jacobs was sponsored by the club from Yonkers. They were all enrolled in the Statler School of Hotel administration. This school had been built, conveniently, just across the street from the armory. Cornell didn't offer a Physical Education degree.

The coaches scheduled an intrasquad game for early December. Most of the sponsored players were on the White team. I was on the Red Team with most of the “walk-ons”. I knew that I would probably have

to guard either Morton or Coddington on the White team. Before the game I sat in the locker room imagining that I was guarding them. It was the same self hypnosis I tried while catching catnaps at Boiberick. Morton was sick and didn't play. I guarded Coddington.

The score was close for most of the game. I remember one shot in particular. I came around under the basket without the ball and with Dick Coddington trailing me. The ball came to me just as I came under the basket. I went right up and layed it in backhand. It was a neat shot. The White team beat us by three points. I scored twelve points while holding Coddington to two baskets.

Two Cornell Daily Sun reporters stopped me after the game as I was leaving the locker room. I knew they had the wrong guy because they kept calling me Dick. Then they said you are Dick Coddington aren't you? I said no, I'm Larry Kravitz. They didn't believe me. “But you were the high scorer, aren't you Coddington?” As I walked home I wondered how they could confuse me with Dick Coddington. His family belonged to a country club in Columbus, Ohio. He played golf

MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1950

## Whites Overcome Reds, 35-32, In Freshman Intrasquad Game

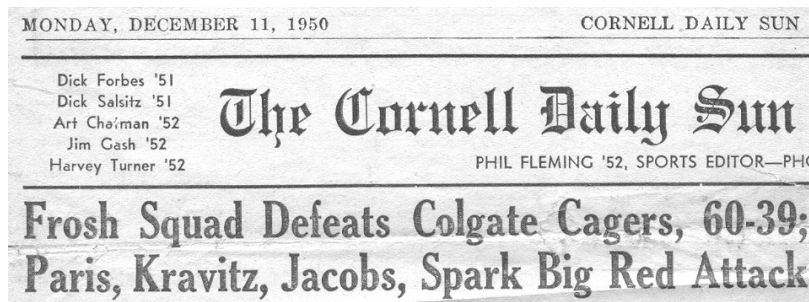
High scorer of the evening was Larry Kravitz who threw in 12 points for the Redmen, mostly on swishing one-handed set shots. Three White boys, diminutive Don Jacobs and tall Pete Paris with nine each and pivotman Wendell MacPhee with eight led the winning scoring parade.

**Kravitz, no giant at 6-1, was one of the smoothest performers in Barton. His style of play, fast, skilled, and confident, reflects the New York City high school ball he played before college.**

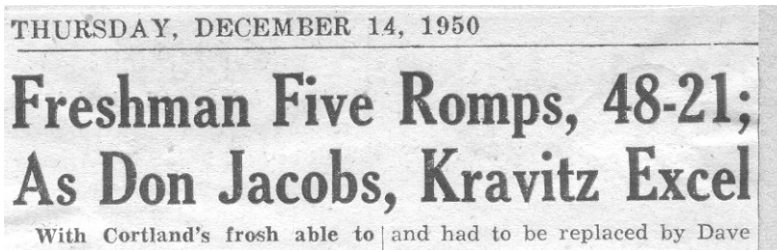
Lee Morton, the reigning



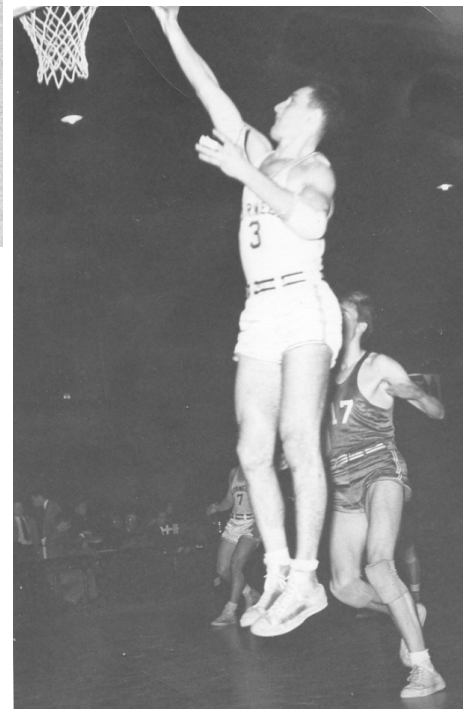
and wore white bucks and did the whole preppy thing. I was just a poor kid from the Bronx wearing a war surplus Navy pea coat.



game to game. Paris, who was 6-5 was usually high scorer with me or Jacobs second, a point or two behind. After Lee Morton came back we all shared game time, but only for one or two games.



As the end of the fall semester approached, the coaches became interested in whether we all would still be academically eligible to play in the spring. One of the managers was assigned to go around and ask us how our grades would be turning out. I overheard some of these conversations in the locker room and was surprised to learn that some of the players were having academic problems, even in the hotel school. When the manager came to me I decided to pull his leg a bit. I told him that my grades were borderline and that it would be nip and tuck for me to "make it". He knew I was an engineer ( the only engineer) and expressed his sympathy with my problem. He tried to summarize by saying, "So it is about 50/50 that you will be eligible to play in the spring, right?." I responded: "Eligibility to play? Who is talking about eligibility to play? I am talking about making Dean's List". He knew he had been had. He stood up and threw a balled up wet towel at me before walking away.



I must have gone home for the Christmas break. I remember that Morty was home with some real news. He was quitting Princeton to go to Panama to get married and join the Army. He had figured out that if he joined the Army in Panama he would serve his entire service time without being transferred anywhere. Then he could marry Suki (Sylvia) Altman, who he met at Boiberick, and whose family lived in Panama. Princeton had



agreed to hold his scholarship until he returned. What he didn't figure on was that he would return with two children.

By the end of January I was getting mentally tired of playing basketball and going to practice every day from 4 to 6pm. With studying and practice I did little else. My playing showed it, and my scoring dropped off. It may have been the constant darkness, cold temperatures, and the struggle to get around to class all day in the snow, go practice, have dinner alone, and then study till midnight. One afternoon, after some freezing rain had left an icy crust on the snow, I jogged up the hill to practice in my baseball spikes. I wondered how the professionals could keep their concentration playing every day.

## 10.6 SECOND SEMESTER-SPRING OF 1951

Bob Rosenthal, my roommate, graduated after 5 1/2 years at Cornell. My new roommate was Howie Littman, a senior chemical engineer. He studied late into the night while crouched up on his desk chair in front of the open window in his undershorts. He claimed the cold air kept him awake. Howie later got a PhD at Yale and taught at RPI.

### 10.6.1 FRESHMAN BASKETBALL- SPRING 1951

My attitude toward basketball practices changed after the new semester started. Both Don Jacobs and Lee Morton were ineligible, so I didn't have to share playing time with them.

#### **Freshman Cagers Overwhelm Ithaca Jayvees; Paris, Kravitz Top Scoring in 73-39 Triumph**

Paris' reins in the absence of head



A few days before the varsity was scheduled to play Columbia on our court, the

varsity coach called me over to the main practice court. He wanted me to show them how Jack Molinas played and to suggest how he should be guarded. I showed them a few of Jack's moves, as I remembered them, and suggested that they put quick man in front of Jack with the center behind him. Our center was a big slow guy who I knew Jack would kill once he got the ball. I told them not to use Whitey's man to front Jack, or Whitey would score from the corner. They took my advice, but lost anyway. Jack was just too good.

We played a freshman game before the varsity game...I don't remember who. As we were leaving the court the Columbia team came out for their warmups. Jack, the Greek, Whitey Brandt and I had a brief reunion at the edge of the court as they began to shoot around.



I never saw Whitey Brandt or Jack again. Thirty years later I ran into the Stan “the Greek” Maratos at Bolling Air Force Base. I told of our reunion in Section 9.13.

The game I remember most from the spring of 1951 was at Syracuse on the night before an exam. I planned to study on the bus ride to Syracuse and to miss the varsity game so I could study in the locker room before the bus ride home.

Our game was very close in the first half, but low scoring. Early in the second half I picked up a loose ball in the right corner and launched a quick one hander that went swish. On the way back down the court I could see the coach shaking his head at me. Later, when I cut out from under our basket without the ball, the man guarding me fell down. I was about five feet beyond the foul circle when I yelled to Dick for the ball. He passed it to me and I set up for a two handed set shot. I could hear the coach yell “Nooo” as I shot it. Swish again. This time he sent in a substitute. I only sat for half a minute when they scored. I went back in.

We led by one point with less than a minute left. Lloyd Walters passed the ball to me behind the midcourt line. I had only half the court to go and one defender to beat for a layup. I dribbled down the left

**of play. Cornell sank the clincher with half a minute remaining on a pass from Dave Bradfield and Lloyd Walters to Kravitz.**

side to about the foul line where I gave the defender a head fake. He went for the fake. I layed the ball in, and looked up at the clock. I recall my elation on seeing that I had put us three points ahead and time running out. We won 55-52. MacFee was high scorer with fifteen points, I was second with thirteen, and Dick had twelve. After the game I studied in the locker room during the first half of the varsity game. I went out to see the second half, but don’t remember a thing about it.

Although Morton and Jacobs couldn’t play in games, they came to practice. It was clear that the coaches wanted them for the varsity the following year. Coddington and I would be available too. The varsity already had a junior guard, Roger Chadwick, who would return. The four of us would have to compete for one guard position. I didn’t think this was too attractive a possibility for the only “walk-on”.

#### **10.6.2 FRATERNITIES-SPRING 1950**

The fraternities started to invite me for lunches after the first inter-squad game in December. The invitations continued through the spring of 1951. I asked Herb’s advice about taking their lunches when I had no intention of joining. He said it would be good experience for me, and it was. The non-Jewish fraternities were the most aggressive ones. I hadn’t, until that time, seen kids with that much money to spend. Some of them had new convertibles, but apologized because they were the small model. On the subject of finances, a couple of them confessed that they were on a tight budget because their college costs were being financed by a trust fund that they were left. This was intended to make me feel comfortable that they were equally as poor as I was, although I never confessed to exactly how poor I was. They wore the kind of expensive clothes that were sold in the “college town” shops, that I would never dream of buying, even now. It was a



good experience. Since freshmen couldn't join fraternities, serious rushing didn't start until the sophomore year. My invitations were just for familiarization. I had the feeling that the Cornell Club players on the team all had made their choices during the freshman year, some of them because of family tradition.

The fraternity visits complemented a paperback book that I read between semesters. I don't remember where I got it or what its title was. The subject of the book was the economic gap between the very rich and the poor. I could relate to this theme because I had made the same observation as I visited the fraternity houses and met all these "poor" fellows with convertibles struggling along on inherited trust funds. At first the book made me angry that these fraternity boys had so much money and I had so little. But I realized that I was best off finding a way to take advantage of the system rather than fighting it. A few years later I recall the author being cited on a list of supposed communists.

The fraternities had shown me what money could buy. I would just have to figure out how to make it.

### **10.6.3 FRESHMAN BASEBALL- SPRING 1951**

Later in the spring I tried out for the baseball team. There were only a couple of players that were "expected". Dick Coddington was a pitcher and Lee Morton a shortstop. Mike Hostage played center field. My competition for catcher was Pete Plamondon. In later years I found Hostage and Plamondon to be executives with the Marriott Corp in Bethesda. They were part of a group that left Marriott to buy out Northwest Airlines.

One of our pitchers was John Manley. He had the best curveball that I had ever caught.

Twenty six years later John Manley and I crossed paths again. He was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force stationed at Andrews Air Force Base with functional responsibility for computer systems. He had gotten a PhD in computers while in the Air Force. John retired soon thereafter and became the director of the Software Research Center at Carnegie Mellon, just about the time that Saul was there. Saul had some weak interaction with John, just before John got fired as Center Director after a faculty uprising. John is still on the faculty, however.

I enjoyed playing baseball out in the sun. We had a good coach who taught me more about baseball than I thought there was to learn. I still never got any batting practice. I remember two games in particular.

One of these games was against Ithaca College, a school that specialized in Physical Education. I got on second base with a double. Then I tried to score when the next batter hit the ball out of the infield. As I rounded third and ran for the plate the coach was giving the slide sign. I slid hard into the catcher who was blocking the plate with his thigh instead of the shinguard. My spikes tore into his leg above the knee as I hit him. I saw blood rushing out of his leg as my coach grabbed me by the shoulders and threw me toward the bench saying, "you don't want to look at that." He was afraid that I wouldn't



block the plate if I saw all the blood. As the game progressed, they hit so many long balls that they scored standing up. I never had to block the plate. I was glad to get out of there.

The other game I remember was against Colgate. Our team couldn't hit their pitcher but I managed to get three of our team's five hits. All were singles to left center field. In a restaurant on the way back to Ithaca the coach joked about "who got all the hits today". I enjoyed baseball. I also knew that my weak hitting made me a poor prospect for the varsity.

## **10.7 LEAVING CORNELL- JUNE 1951**

As the spring semester came to an end I studied hard and ended up with all A's and B's, except for Air Force ROTC, where I had a C and a D.

I went back to New York with Joe in his car, by way of Washington D.C. This was a week before the Memorial Day weekend. I don't remember why we went to Washington. By the first night we had gotten as far as Gettysburg where we pulled off the road and slept in a field. In the morning we woke up to find cows grazing nearby. Near my head was a gravestone of Civil War soldier. Other stones were nearby. We drove off to see some people Joe knew in Beltsville, MD, near the Agricultural Experiment Station. None of the interstates were built then, so all of this travel was over state roads.

I knew that I couldn't go back to Cornell unless I had an extension to the scholarship and had good earnings at Camp Boiberick that summer. I must have mentioned this financial problem to the varsity basketball coach and gotten little encouragement. So I had packed all my things at the end of the semester, not knowing where I would go to college in the fall.

## **10.8 FINDING KANSAS UNIVERSITY AT CAMP BOIBERICK-SUMMER 1951**

After a few days in the Bronx I went to Boiberick to work the Memorial Day weekend. Whitey, Danny, and Bernie Nassau were back from Oklahoma A&M. Bernie Nassau reported how "great" it was to go to college at Oklahoma A&M. Not only were tuition and living costs less than at schools in the East, but people were also so nice, he said. I thought about Cornell, which was so expensive and where the people, especially the engineering students, were much like the students I had known at Stuyvesant. Bernie Nassau was actually lobbying for me to join him at Oklahoma A&M. I was receptive.

After Memorial Day weekend, and I was back in the Bronx, I sent for catalogs of colleges in the Kansas-Oklahoma area. They came in a few weeks. Bernie Nassau was right. Their tuitions were low.

I examined each catalog to see which school would give me the most transfer credits for my Cornell courses. Based on this transfer credit analysis and my financial projections, I chose Kansas University. With my expected earnings at Boiberick in the summer, and my remaining savings, I thought I could just squeak by for a year. This alternative was



better than going to City College or Cooper Union, where I knew I could still go if I wanted to.

I applied for admission to KU before starting to work at Boiberick in the summer of 1951.

### 10.9 CAMP BOIBERICK- SUMMER 1951

That summer I was the busboy for Whitey Koslowski. We had the best tables in the dining room. Our tables were usually filled with weeklong guests who were good tippers.

Our guests included businessmen, lawyers and accountants from New York City. They knew we were going to college and occasionally asked about our plans. I recall at least three such discussions when I told them that I was studying electrical engineering. Their response was uniformly some equivalent of : “Engineering is not a field for a Jew.” They reminded me of the fellow at McCalls who told me to be careful because I was Jewish. I decided to ignore them all.

Kansas University sent my acceptance sometime in July.

My Draft Board also classified me as 1-A, effective July 12. I was thus among those to be called if the army needed soldiers for the war in Korea. I didn’t know anyone who had been drafted, but the 1-A classification made me feel vulnerable.

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM  
NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION

Approval of Budget  
Bureau not required

Francis Lawrence Clark  
(Last name) (First name) (Middle name)

Selective Service No. 50 19 32 368

has been classified in Class 1A (Until \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_) by ☒ Local Board. ☐ Appeal Board, ☐ President

by vote of \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (Show vote on appeal board cases only)

JUL 12 1951 (Date of mailing)

D.S. Green (Member of local board)

EX-100 (Department of Defense)

I earned about \$1,000 in tips that summer. This was enough for Kansas, but not enough for Cornell. I don’t remember when I told Mama my plan to go to Kansas, but I recall that she accepted my decision without argument.

Joe suggested I give the Cornell basketball coach another chance. When I reminded the coach about my financial problem and told him my plan, he suggested I call him again as I was passing Scranton on the Pennsylvania turnpike on my way to Kansas....he’d see what he could do.

### 10.10 GOING TO KANSAS- SEPTEMBER 1951

I left for Kansas after Labor Day with Whitey, Danny, Nookie (another busboy) and Bernie Nassau, in Danny’s car. Since the Pennsylvania Turnpike didn’t go through Scranton, I called the coach from a rest stop on the Turnpike. I wasn’t surprised that the answer was the same. He couldn’t help. So I kept going.

We followed Route 40 to St Louis, and then Route 66 southwest diagonally across Missouri. They dropped me off in Joplin, at the southwest corner of Missouri. I expected



to take a Greyhound Bus from Joplin to Kansas City. From Kansas City I planned to take another bus to Lawrence, Kansas.

All went as planned, except for the floods. That September the Kansas and Missouri Rivers over ran their banks and flooded the parallel highways. Traffic was forced to make



**From left: Whitey, Danny, Bernie, Nookie, me. We are at a rest stop on the Pennsylvania Turnpike.**

long detours. All of the busses fell behind schedule. My bus was late getting into Joplin and even later getting into Kansas City. I arrived at about 1am, long after the last bus to Lawrence.

With no place to go and all night to wait, I wandered out of the terminal to a small park where I sat on the only free bench. The other benches were occupied by sleeping men. The place reminded me of Stuyvesant Park. A policeman came by and asked me what I was doing there. I explained about missing the bus to Lawrence. He asked a few more questions and seemed

satisfied by my answers. Then I thought it was my turn to ask him something. I asked him whether this was “Kansas City Kansas, or Kansas City Missouri?” He gave me this “look stupid” smile and said “Kansas City Missouri” before he walked off.

The next morning I caught the first bus to Lawrence. I recall seeing snowplows pushing river mud off of the highway. Flooded properties lined the side of the road. I was so busy looking at the flood damage that I never saw the bus turn south as we entered the Main Street of Lawrence. After that I always thought Main Street went East-West. I never regained my sense of direction.

Lawrence, Kansas was a pleasant town of about 5000 people. Its streets were wide and clean. The Carlisle Indian Institute, where Jim Thorpe was an alumnus, was located at the south end of town. I immediately liked the clean, casual, and friendly small town atmosphere.

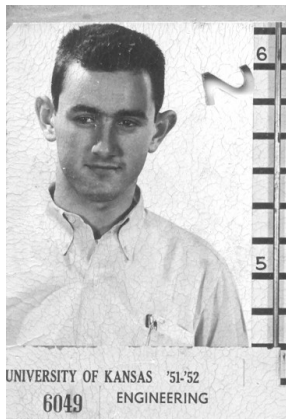
The university was located on Mount Oread, a small hill west of the downtown area.



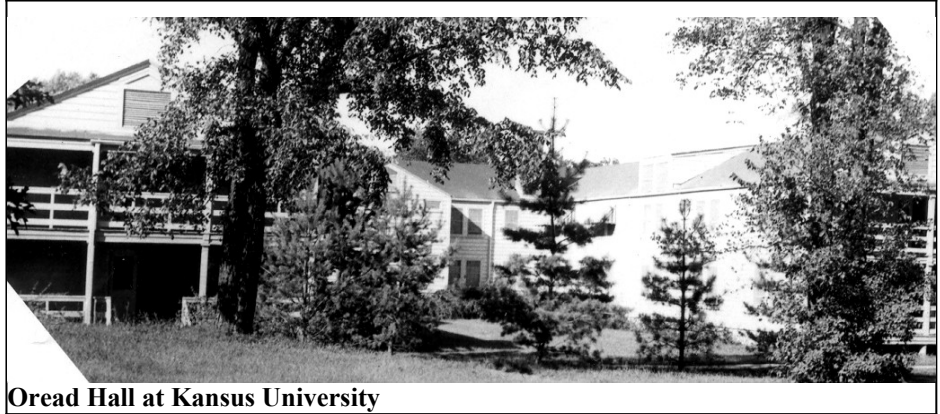
## 11 KANSAS UNIVERSITY 1951-1954

### 11.1 MY SOPHOMORE YEAR 1951-1952

#### 11.1.1 ENROLLING –FALL 1951



My '51-'52 ID Photo



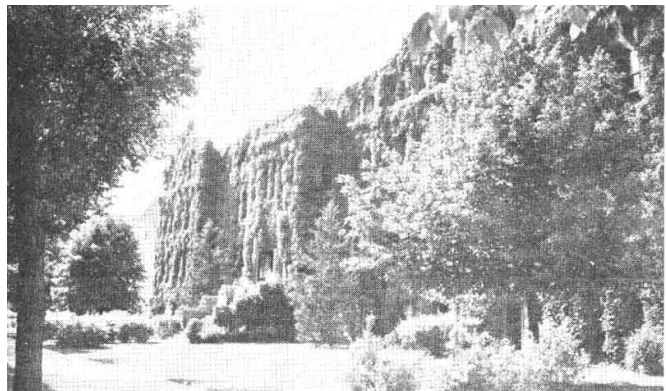
Oread Hall at Kansas University

My dormitory room as in Oread Hall, a converted WWII barracks building. The room was about 8ft by 10ft, with one window, and furnished with an iron flat-spring bed, a cheap mattress, a desk with a chair, a chest of drawers, and a closet. The fellow next door on one side was Ahmed Ghaffari, an Iranian who was sent there to study Economics. Why Kansas? That is where his embassy sent him. From his clothes and tastes I guessed that he came from a wealthy Iranian family. Next door on the other side was Bob, a business student who had dropped out of Fairleigh Dickenson College. Too tough, he said. Bob was friendly, but not very bright. I never gave the subject much thought, but one time Ahmed said that he guessed that Bob and I were both Jews.

#### 11.1.2 THE ENGINEERING SCHOOL

The buildings of the engineering school reflected the history of engineering in Kansas. The largest building, Marvin Hall, housed mechanical and civil engineering.

The EE building was a small two-story brick building behind Marvin Hall. Electrical power was relatively new to Kansas. Many parts of Kansas hadn't had electricity until 12-14 years earlier, when Roosevelt's rural electrification program spread electric power the farm counties. The ground

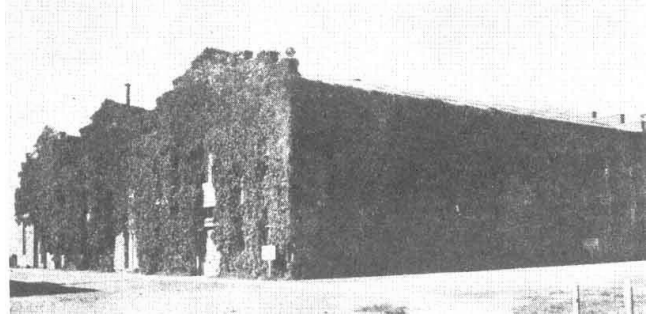


Marvin Hall-The Main Engineering Building



floor of the EE building was therefore devoted to power lines, motors and generators.

Electronics was new to KU. It arrived only about five years before I did, when the World War II veterans who came to the Electrical Engineering Department after military electronics training demanded EE's in electronics. This student pressure forced the school to add an electronics option to the existing electrical power curriculum.



Had I judged the Electrical Engineering Department by my present standards I never would have gone there. The **The Electrical Engineering Building** course catalog, which was my primary basis for choosing the school, showed the right course titles. But the Department was hardly a Department at all. There were only three professors and two instructors. Two of the professors taught electronics, and one taught motors and generators. The electronics laboratories were minimally equipped. Of course, at that time I didn't know what I wanted, so KU was good enough

There were only about 50 EE students spanning the three years that students identified themselves with the EE department. Classes were therefore small, usually no more than about 15 people in anyone class. Everyone knew everyone.

I enrolled in 17.5 hours of courses, plus one credit hour of ROTC for the fall semester.

#### **11.1.3 KANSAS VARSITY BASKETBALL-SEPTEMBER 1951**

I had never considered the possibility of playing varsity basketball at Kansas. Regardless of ability, transfer students were ineligible to play for a year. I didn't want to spend five years in college. Nevertheless, I couldn't resist seeing what the theoretical possibility was once I got to Kansas. I found that the team practiced from one pm to five pm daily, unlike the Ivy League where practice couldn't start before four pm. Team sports and afternoon lab courses therefore didn't coexist at Kansas. Players had to be totally committed to athletics.

That Kansas team went on to win the NCAA championship. Clyde Lovellette, later to be an all-pro, was the center. Dean Smith, later to be the famous coach at North Carolina, was a junior guard. And two big Kelley brothers were the other guards. I couldn't have made that team.

#### **11.1.4 MY OWN ROOM**

My own room was a totally new experience. I had never had a room of my own. I could sit and struggle with a problem without any disturbance for as long as I wanted.



My first struggle in the quiet of this room was with the electrical capacitor. I was puzzled, just as I was puzzled earlier with the first derivative in calculus. This time I decided to attack the problem until I understood it.

I spent a whole afternoon one day, with no one to interrupt my thinking, trying to figure out where the electric charges went and how the dielectric responded. Finally, like the light bulb that came on in the comic strip, I suddenly understood how it worked. I left the room and walked down the hall to the toilet. I doubted whether I would still understand it when I came back. But I did. I remembered that Mama always said that, if "I put my head to it", I could figure out anything. Maybe, I thought, she was right.

My self-confidence gained a big boost when I solved the electrical capacitor that day. Thereafter, I "put my head to" any difficult concept until I figured it out.

#### 11.1.4 MY DRAFT STATUS-SEPTEMBER 1951

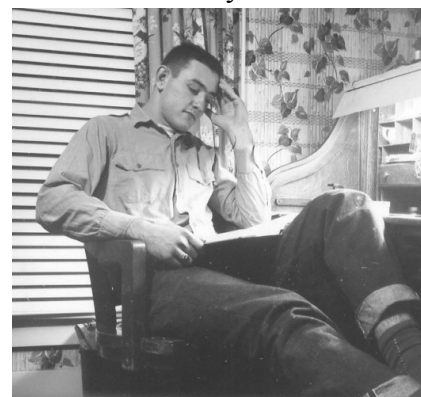
My Draft reclassification from 1A to 2A-S. arrived. I didn't really understand this 2A-S classification, except that it appeared less threatening than my 1A classification.

#### 11.1.5 KAPPA ETA KAPPA FRATERNITY- OCTOBER 1951

Not long after I settled into Oread Hall I was rushed by the Kappa Eta Kappa fraternity, a fraternity limited to Electrical Engineering and Engineering Physics students. It occupied a large frame house just off of the campus.

The KHK fraternity house had two attractions. The cost of room and board was lower than in the dorms. And the house had a large file of old exams on every course in Electrical Engineering. This file held all of the original exams deposited by the members, as well as the worked solutions to the questions. I joined KHK after only about six weeks in Oread Hall.

I was assigned to share a third floor study room with a senior. The comfortable room had a large oak roll top desk and a large closet. I studied and kept my clothes there. We all slept in double decker beds on a sleeping porch on the second floor. This sleeping porch was comfortable for most of the year. It was bearable, with enough blankets, even on the coldest nights.



as

At my desk at KHK



Most of the KHK members were from small towns and farms in Kansas. Most of them shared my need for low living expenses.

I was surprised at how many of the members brought guns to school. These guns, I learned, were just part of their personal belongings. They weren't brandished, although one night during an exam week Bob Hill took his gun out the back door vowing to get a cat that had been howling for some time behind the house. One shot silenced the cat.

Several members operated ham radios and transmitters from the "ham shack" on the second floor. Long antenna wires stretched from the ham shack window out to some trees in the back yard. The hams used Morse code keys to broadcast their CQ (seek you) message. Then they listened to their receivers for a response from someone who had heard their call, preferably someone in South America, Africa, or Australia. They transmitted in the middle of the night when atmospheric conditions were best for long-range radio propagation. They vied with each other to see who could make the most distant contact. We heard the bragging about their contacts at breakfast. They always exchanged postcards with their contact. Every day's mail brought postcards from all around the world.

After several weeks, I was able to associate individual members with the grades I found on their exams in the house exam file. I found that the ham operators, and a couple of others who talked the most freely about electronics from their experience as Navy technicians, were not the good students. The good students were actually people like me, with little prior contact with electronics. Charlie Stevens and Duane Dunwoody were both excellent students...Charlie became a VP of Lockheed; Duane founded his own instrument company and later gave the school a multimillion dollar donation for an electronics lab.

Bob Ashley was an exception to this rule. Bob had been a Navy technician and was also a good student. He and I became friends. Later I bought my first car from him and he became my mentor in auto work.

Bob roomed with Warren Murray, who suffered from spastic palsy. After a year of their rooming together Bob met Warren's sister Wanda. They soon decided to marry. This caused a lot of talk in the house because Bob was a devout Catholic while Wanda was a Protestant. I saw firsthand, long before Kennedy's nomination, how Protestant middle America viewed the Catholics and their Pope. In the end, the Kansan's basic tolerance prevailed. Warren adjusted to his sister marrying a Catholic. In all of this I felt like the silent fly on the wall.

A number of the members had cars. Theirs weren't the new postwar cars that I had seen at Cornell, but more modest, mostly prewar, models. These prewar models were well preserved because corrosive salt was not used to deice the roads in Kansas.



**Clowning in Schmidt's  
Navy ROTC Uniform**



I borrowed Gary Corman's 1939 Ford to give myself driving lessons in a supermarket parking lot. After some practice, I signed up for the road test given by the State Police. The trooper who gave me the exam was a huge fellow. I banged his legs every time I shifted the gear with the floor shift. But I passed the test.

I joined the student chapter of the Institute for Radio Engineers and the American Institute of Electrical Engineers. Since all of the KHK members were Electrical Engineering students, the elected officers of this organization were usually KHK members. Thus I was elected secretary of the IRE\_AIEE chapter in November.

ALL BOYS AT WASH. STATE COLLEGE.  
**KEK 39, Pharmacy Five 33**  
 Lawrence Kravitz scored 21 points to lead Kappa Eta Kappa to a 39-33 victory over the Pharmacy Five. Arthur Powell led the scoring for the Pharmacy team with 14 points. Phi Delta Theta 41, ATO 22.

#### 11.1.6 MY FIRST CAR- DECEMBER 1951

I bought my first car, a 1939 Nash Rambler, from Bob Ashley just before Christmas vacation. Bob had driven the car from his home in Flagstaff, Arizona. He asked \$25 for it. Its problem, he said, was that it consumed oil. It needed new piston rings. I asked him how I could fix it. His instructions were simple. Just take off the head, and drop the oil pan. Then take the pistons out and put new rings on the pistons. Put the pistons back with new bearings. Put back the head and put back the pan. He suggested I buy the parts at Montgomery Ward in Kansas City. He offered me his toolbox to work on the car over the holiday. I accepted his challenge and bought the car.

I tried to remember Bob's instructions as I set to work in a garage in the back yard behind KHK. I blocked up the car and took the engine apart. By the time Bob got back from vacation, I was in the process of putting the engine back together. All of the pistons and the bearing end caps were carefully placed in a cardboard box so no parts would get lost, just as he told me to do. Bob saw the situation and was aghast. I had not marked the pistons so they could go back into the same cylinder I took each out of. And I had not kept the piston end caps together with the piston each one came off of. Since each piston had gotten worn to match its cylinder and each bearing end cap was worn to match its mating bearing we could only guess which part went where when we put the engine back together. The reassembly was a mish-mash. We wondered how it would work, if at all.

To our surprise the car started and, except for some engine chatter at about 48 mph, it seemed to run fine. Bob said the chatter came from the mismatch of the bearing end caps with the original pistons. The car ran quietly if I stayed a little above or below 48 mph. It seemed to stop using oil and was good enough for running around town. I went downtown and bought my first liability insurance from Allstate.

#### 11.1.8 MY DRAFT STATUS- JAN 1952

I was reclassified from 2A-S to 1D in January. I didn't know what this new classification meant. Whatever it was, it wasn't 1A.

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM  
 NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION

Approval of Budget  
 Bureau not required

**KRAVITZ** **LAWRENCE** **CHARLES**  
 (Last name) (First name) (Middle name)

Selective Service No. **50** **19** **32** **368** has  
 been classified in Class **1 D** (Until  
 19.....) by ☒ Local Board. ☐ Appeal Board,  
 by vote of ..... to .....  
 (Show vote on appeal board cases only)

**JAN 3 1952** (Date of mailing) 19..... **W.S. Green**  
 (Member of local board)

*Lawrence C. Kravitz*



### **11.1.9 MY ACCELERATION PLAN-FEBRUARY 1952**

I earned a 2.7 /3.0 grade point average in my first semester at KU. Before picking the courses for the second semester, I mapped out all the courses I needed to graduate. I made a startling discovery in the process.

I found that, because of my advanced transfer credits from Cornell, I could possibly graduate in 3 1/2 years of college. To graduate in 3 ½ years I had to take some heavy course loads, including one course in technical writing by correspondence, and a double load of ROTC for one semester. I was cocky enough to think that I could do all of this without hurting my grade point average, which had been 2.7/3.0.

The "acceleration plan" required me to take 20 credit hours in the spring of 1952. This load, including two labs, business law, and differential equations (Diff. E.), proved to be more than I could successfully handle. It didn't allow me the time to wrestle with some conceptual problems in Diff.E. I also couldn't adapt to the long-winded writing style that Business Law demanded. I made C's in both courses during the spring semester.

My GPA for the spring 1952 semester suffered. It fell to 1.7, less than a B average. Not very good. I had been too cocky.

### **11.1.10 MONEY –JUNE 1952**

My bank balance sank toward zero as the spring semester drew to a close. I wasn't concerned. I knew the balance would be replenished with the money I would earn at Boiberick in the coming summer.

I was then shocked to learn that I was not invited back to work at Boiberick. They felt that the previous summer, when I was the senior busboy, and when "Dumb Dora" was making demands on the busboys, that I should have tried harder to get the busboys to comply with Dora. So I had been fired. This was a bitter and scary disappointment at the time. I had to find another summer job. In retrospect, it was good luck

Bob Ashley suggested that I take his job as station engineer at the local radio station for the summer. The job involved operating the transmitter, serving as the disk jockey, and making some periodic announcements. Bob offered to tutor me for the required FCC license exam. He recommended me to the station manager.

The station manager invited me out for an interview. We chatted for a few minutes. Then he suggested that he record my voice as I read a news announcement. The moment I heard my voice played back, I knew I was unfit for the job. My "New York" speech was not appropriate for a mid-Kansas broadcast station. As the manager put it, "Not exactly the voice of a white man, is it?" I agreed and left, determined to concentrate on losing my New York dialect. I still needed a job for the summer.



My job search led me to the campus recruiters of various companies. My first meeting was with The Radio Corporation of America. This interview went well. I was offered a summer job at the RCA vacuum tube plant in Harrison, New Jersey. The job paid about \$75 per week. I could gross about \$900 for 12 weeks of work, which was less than I would have made at Boiberick. After deducting expenses, my net savings would be even less. I knew that the following school year would be a big financial challenge when I accepted the offer.

Bob Ashley also suggested that I apply for a scholarship that he held. This was the John Morse Scholarship. It offered \$500 per year for two years. I thought that the probability of my winning this was very low. (I remembered the people who told me "Engineering is not a field for a Jew". And here I was, a Jew in Kansas!). I applied for the scholarship anyway.

#### 11.1.11 MY CLASS STANDING- JUNE 1952

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM		Form approved. Budget Bureau No. 33-R124.1.	
<b>COLLEGE STUDENT CERTIFICATE</b>			
1. Name of student <b>Kravitz Lawrence C.</b> (Last) (First) (Middle)		2. Selective Service No. <b>50 19 32 368</b>	
4. Mailing address <b>1135 Maine Lawrence, Kansas</b> (Number and street or R. F. D. route) (City, town, or village) (Zone) (County) (State)		3. Date of birth <b>7 27 32</b> (Month) (Day) (Year)	
5. Number and address of local board where registered <b>Local Board No. 19 1910 Arthur Avenue Bronx 57, New York</b>		6. Name and address of institution issuing this certificate <b>UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS LAWRENCE KANSAS</b>	
SECTION ONE UNDERGRADUATE AND TRANSFERRED STUDENTS			
<p>"X" and complete items 7 (a), and either 7 (b) or 7 (c). Transferred student should have item 7 (a) completed by institution last attended; item 7 (c) by institution to which transferred, using separate forms.</p> <p>7 (a) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The student identified in items 1 and 2 of this form was, at the close of his most recently completed full college year ending <b>June 2, 1952</b>, a full-time student, and was an undergraduate in his ("X" one), <input type="checkbox"/> first, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> second, <input type="checkbox"/> third, <input type="checkbox"/> fourth, <input type="checkbox"/> fifth, <input type="checkbox"/> sixth, or <input type="checkbox"/> seventh-year class. During that year he was in the school, <b>Engineering and Architecture</b>, leading to the degree of <b>B.S. in E.E.S.</b> He successfully completed that year, and achieved a scholastic standing in that year's work which ranked him for that year <b>21</b> among <b>155</b> full-time male students in his class.</p>			

The university sent the required College Student Certificate to my Draft Board at the end of the semester.

Note that the certificate shows that my class standing was 21<sup>st</sup> out of 155 at the end of my sophomore year.

#### 11.1.12 END OF THE SPRING SEMESTER- JUNE 1952

I drove the Rambler from Kansas to New York after the end of the spring semester. I was fairly confident that I would be returning to Kansas for my junior year, but I wasn't positive. So I packed all my belongings in shippable boxes, just in case the car didn't make it.



I followed Route 40 eastward. It was the only route from west to east before the interstates were built, and only a two lane road most of the way. I drove as long as I could, and then catnapped by the side of the road. I couldn't afford a motel room. I kept the Rambler in overdrive, just below its 48 mph chatter speed. This was tricky because the transmission automatically dropped out of overdrive below 45 mph. The 1200-mile trip took over two days.

A memorable part of the trip was the drive into Indianapolis at dusk. I ran into an endless stream of cars heading in the opposite direction, just a few feet away across the yellow line of the two-lane road. I couldn't avoid looking into their headlights. Within a short time I was almost blind and had to pull off and rest my eyes. The next day I glanced at a paper in a restaurant and discovered source of the cars. They were leaving from the Indianapolis 500.

I then developed some ignition problems as I went through the center of Indianapolis. I parked under the neon lights of a gas station to check the wires and clean the spark plugs.

Indianapolis also had gas price wars. The discount price was as low as 16 cents a gallon, as compared to 21 cents out of town. I filled up the tank.

The rest of the trip was uneventful. I kept wondering when my luck would run out.

#### **11.1.13 RADIO CORPORATION OF AMERICA- SUMMER 1952**

I started working at RCA as soon as I could. I lived at home in the Bronx and commuted by train each day to RCA in Harrison, N.J.

My job was in the electron tube application-engineering laboratory. The applications engineers helped customers use RCA vacuum tubes. The engineers' most important customers were the major manufacturers of radios and televisions.

My first assignment was to build a tester for some gas discharge tubes that Eckert Mauchly, a company in Philadelphia, was experimenting with. Their application for these tubes was in a digital computing machine that they were trying to develop. Although I built the tester, I never was curious about Eckert Mauchly and its computing machine. I was more interested in radio and TV tube applications.

A transistor applications group was located in an adjacent laboratory. Those engineers were experimenting with new applications for transistors. (This was 1952, about six years after the transistor was invented.) The engineers I worked with thought transistors were interesting, but not important. So I wasn't curious about transistors either.

In retrospect, I should have paid more attention to Eckert Mauchly's computer development and the work in the transistor lab than to the television and radio tubes. Eckert Mauchly pioneered the first general purpose digital computers and then became the basis of the Rand Computer Company. IBM entered the field of general-



purpose digital computing a bit later. The RCA tubes that I tested were the basis of these earliest computer developments.

Transistors began displacing vacuum tubes in all consumer electronic applications and became the basis of computers within the next eight years. Had I been with people who could foresee these developments, my life might have taken a different turn. Six years later I found myself at the interface between transistors and tubes again, and again I would be on the side of the loser.

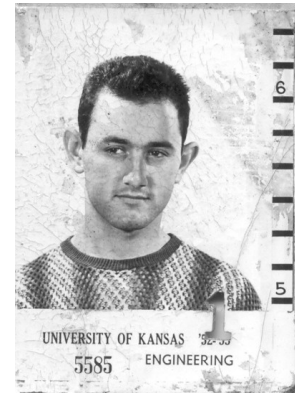
I didn't make as much money at RCA as I would have made at Boiberick. I had, however, gained engineering experience. I had seen electrical engineers in action, and I knew I was as good as they were..even if they knew more at the moment. I didn't, however, see myself spending my life doing what they were doing. I was glad that Boiberick didn't want me. I had outgrown the busboy job, but I missed the money.

At the end of the summer I packed up the Rambler with all my belongings and set out for Kansas by myself. I drove cautiously at first, but as I crossed into Kansas my confidence rose. I drove the last 40 miles at 55 mph. Bob Ashley was shocked to see that his old car had taken me both ways.

## **11.2 MY JUNIOR YEAR AT KANSAS UNIVERSITY –FALL 1952**

I enrolled in 14 hours plus 3 hours of ROTC. I was now in the voluntary ROTC program, which paid \$25 a month, and committed me to accept an Air Force Commission if it was offered. The ROTC course requirement increased to three hours from one hour.

My new roommate was Ed House. Ed was an engineering physics student from Fort Worth, Texas. He had a Naval ROTC Scholarship that paid his tuition and living expenses.



**My '52-53 ID photo.**

### **11.2.1 MONEY**

I knew that I needed to supplement my meager summer savings. So I took one of the jobs in the KHK kitchen waiting on the tables. This wasn't cash producing, but it provided a discount off of my house bill.

To my surprise, I was awarded a John Morse Scholarship of \$500 for the year.



Dean Carr, the Dean of Engineering sent a congratulation letter to Mama. Meir helped her write a response. This is another indication of the esteem in which Mama held Meir as "an educated man and a Rabbi". I only learned about Mama's response when Martha sent me the draft.

Sometime during this year Joe started to send money to me. This was money that Mama had sent to him while he was in college. Joe had tracked her payments to the penny and was now recycling the money to me with similar diligent accounting. I don't recall

asking for the money, and I don't recall knowing that Mama had sent him any. Joe began a regular stream of \$15 payments which I deposited until I needed the cash.

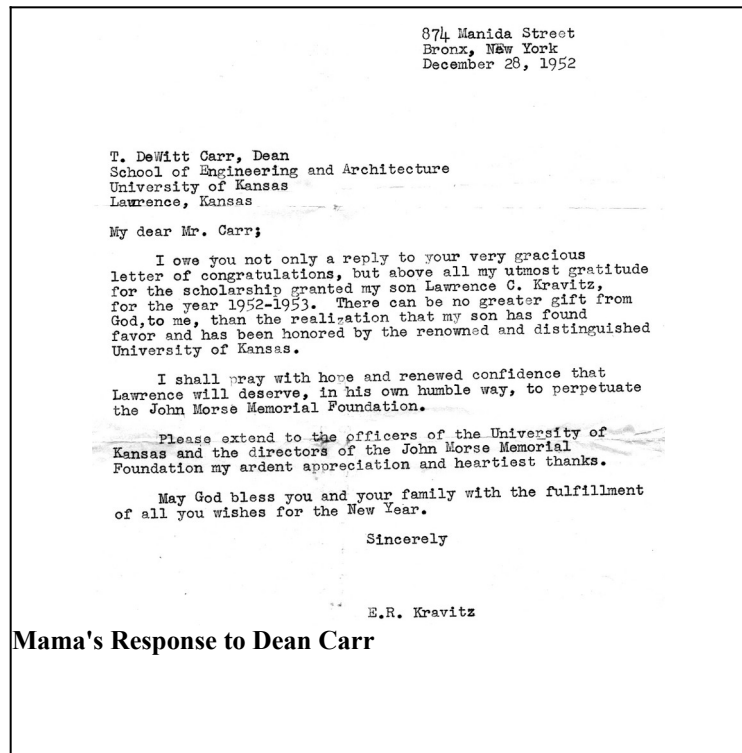
My RCA savings fell far short of what I needed. The \$500 scholarship allowed me to stay in school.

### 11.2.2 THE SOCIAL CHAIRMAN

I was elected Social Chairman of KHK. This was not a very demanding job since our engineering members weren't very social. But one incident stands out.

One Sunday afternoon we were just hanging out on the front porch of the house when some well dressed men of student age started walking up from the sidewalk. As they approached, I noticed some of the others get up and go inside. One of our members met them at the front steps and after a few words he called me to talk to them. Then I saw everyone else disappear inside leaving me alone with these two on the porch. When I invited them inside to the living room, everyone evaporated from there too. I wondered what was going on.

The two men explained what everyone else already knew: they were from the Mormon Church. They wanted to talk to people about their church, primarily to invite new members, but also to create understanding. I told them that, as everyone in our house knew, and that is why I was left holding this bag, I was



**In front of the KHK House**



Jewish and certainly not a candidate for membership. But as social chairman I thought their film and talk might make a good program for one of our meeting nights. I agreed to bring the subject up and get back to them.

To my surprise, the idea of inviting the Mormons was supported by the members. Their program was interesting and well received. Many people who would not have been comfortable in a one on one encounter felt good about our invitation. I could only chuckle privately about how they had stuck me to deal with the situation.

### **11.2.3 THE HUNTER- WINTER 1952**

My first hunting outing was with Ed Calabrese, a KHK member from a ranch about two hours west of the campus. He took me home for a weekend to see his place and to learn how to hunt. He showed me how a hunting party should fan out to avoid accidentally shooting each other. When I shot my first rabbit he showed me how I was supposed to put my foot on its back, grab its head, and wring its neck. This was hard for me because the rabbit usually blinked its eyes and made me ashamed of what I was doing to it. After his introduction I began to go rabbit hunting with a few of the guys on Sunday afternoons during the winter after a snowfall. Being out in the snow was fun, even when we didn't hit many rabbits.



### **11.2.4 CAMPUS ACTIVITIES AND HONOR SOCIETIES- FALL 1952**

My main campus activities were as the EE representative on the Engineering Council, Secretary of the IRE-AIEE Chapter and Secretary of KHK. These activities and my grade point standing made me eligible for election to a number of honor societies. I accepted election to the Owl Society for Junior Men and to Eta Kappa Nu for Electrical Engineers. Both of these societies required an initiation fee of about \$20. I declined election to Sigma Tau (Engineering) and Sigma Pi Sigma (Physics), each of which would have cost me another \$20. I bought a key for each society that I joined. I mounted the keys along a key chain.



### **11.2.5 SPRING SEMESTER 1953**

I completed the fall 1952 semester with a grade point average of 2.8/3.0. My plan to finish in 3 1/2 years now required me to take 15 hours plus 6 hours of ROTC in the spring semester.

I still needed extra money. So I spent the spring break working with the campus gardeners. I tilled flowerbeds alongside some itinerant Mexican workers. The hours



were long and the pay rate was low. Fortunately, the weather was pleasant. The money helped.

As my junior year came to an end I was elected into the Tau Beta Pi (Engineering), and Omicron Delta Kappa (Leadership) honor societies. Their keys went on the chain. My grades during the Spring Semester were a perfect 3.0/3.0.

#### 11.2.6 MY CLASS STANDING AFTER THE JUNIOR YEAR

UNDERGRADUATE AND TRANSFERRED STUDENTS	
"X" and complete items 7 (a), and either 7 (b) or 7 (c). Transferred student should have item 7 (a) completed by institution last attended; item 7 (c) by institution to which transferred, using separate forms.	
7 (a)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The student identified in items 1 and 2 of this form was, at the close of his most recently completed full college year ending <u>JUN 8 1953</u> , a full-time student, and was an undergraduate in his ("X" one), <input type="checkbox"/> first, <input type="checkbox"/> second, <input type="checkbox"/> third, <input type="checkbox"/> fourth, <input type="checkbox"/> fifth, <input type="checkbox"/> sixth, or <input type="checkbox"/> seventh-year class. During that year he was in the school, college, division or department of <u>Engineering and Architecture</u> , leading to the degree of <u>BS in E. E.</u> . He successfully completed that year, and achieved a scholastic standing in that year's work which ranked him for that year <u>7</u> among <u>173</u> full-time male students in his class. This placed him in the (place "X" in highest applicable box), <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> upper one-half, <input type="checkbox"/> upper two-thirds, <input type="checkbox"/> upper three-fourths, <input type="checkbox"/> lower one-fourth of his class.

The university submitted my annual student certificate to my Draft Board. The certificate showed that my class standing had risen to 7<sup>th</sup> in 173, as a result of my 2.9/3.0 junior year grade point average,

#### 11.2.7 RCA AND ROTC SUMMER CAMP- SUMMER OF 1953

I was obligated to attend ROTC summer camp for the month of August during the summer of 1953. I could earn money in June and July.

RCA offered me the same summer job in 1953 that I had in 1952, but for the months of June and July.

The Rambler was thirteen years old and beyond repair. I don't remember how I got rid of the car. I returned to New York after the spring semester with some other students from the New York area.

When I arrived home in June 1953 I found Joe's car, a 1939 Plymouth, parked in front of our house on Manida Street. It had been there so long that the tires had gone flat. I remembered that Joe had the engine rebuilt professionally in Ithaca when I was there in 1950-1951. He had abandoned the car on Manida Street rather than insure it. I bought the car on credit from Joe for \$150. He replaced a couple of the tires. This was my next car.

I also helped Bernie buy a used car. Bernie had looked in the newspapers and located a private sale in the Bronx. I went with him for moral support as he bought a 1951 Chevrolet, 2 door Sedan. I don't know what he ever used it for. He felt very good about it at the time.

##### 11.2.7.1 RCA – JUNE AND JULY 1953

My assignment at RCA was to build a Yagi antenna, following a handbook design, to test the reception capability of a particular UHF receiving tube. (This challenge



reminded me of the time I tried unsuccessfully to receive radio signals from a cats whisker detector attached to an antenna.). To understand the Yagi antenna before I built it, I tried to read about antennas to understand the Yagi. When I couldn't understand what I read, I consulted the other engineers. They were of little help. I eventually put the antenna together. It worked. But I knew I didn't understand it. I added antennas to the mental list of things I had to learn.

#### **11.2.7.2 ROTC SUMMER CAMP-AUGUST 1953**

##### **11.2.7.2A TO MacDILL AIR FORCE BASE-THE ROADSIDE MECHANIC**

Students who lived in Kansas were assigned to a summer camp at an Air Force Base in the midwest. Since I would be traveling from New York, I was assigned to camp at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. I was also given the names of other people from the New York area that would be going to MacDill. One of these names, a fellow in New Jersey, agreed to let me share expenses driving in his car. Counting me, he had a group of four. He planned to drive straight through without stopping.

I met him at his house, a single-family home in a nice section of New Jersey. He was tall and very well mannered. He introduced us to his mother and stepfather, and told us that it was his stepfather's car that we would be driving. We left there at about 4pm and drove south along Route 1. Soon after we left he announced that, because it was his stepfather's car, he would do all of the driving. I thought he was being a bit silly. I curled up in the back seat and dozed off.

He woke us up awhile later, as the sun was going down. He wanted us to see that the car was emitting a jet stream out of its exhaust. I looked out of the rear window, saw the vapor trail and thought about the possibilities. Then I announced my diagnosis: "The engine had blown a head gasket. We had to stop and have it repaired." He didn't respond, either because he didn't hear me or because he didn't understand what I said. After the others commented he said: "lets keep going and see what happens." I said: "OK, it's your car. But keep your eye on the temperature gauge. If you see the temperature rising you better pull off or you'll wreck the engine." With that pronouncement I dozed off again.

It was well after dark when he shouted out that the temperature gauge was rising fast. I looked out of the window and saw that we were driving down the center of some town, probably in Virginia or North Carolina. All of the stores and gas stations were closed. I told him to pull in behind a gas station that looked like it did repair work. We would have to sleep there and fix it in the morning. He did as I told him to. We all went to sleep.

The manager of the gas station arrived at about 6:30 am. I told him we had to report to MacDill, but we needed to fix a head gasket. I told him that I could do the work if he loaned me his tools and ordered the gasket for me. He was probably a veteran himself. He loaned me the tools to do the job and ordered the head gasket delivered for us.



While the others watched, I took off my shirt and started to work. I removed the ignition, the carburetor, and then the engine head. It was a simple GM L-head engine with the valves in the cylinder block. The gasket arrived at just the right time. I replaced the blown gasket, reassembled the engine, and started the car. It started fine. The whole process took about an hour and a half. The garage manager was impressed. My friends were in awe. I was amazed that my driver wouldn't let me drive his stepfather's car, but would let me take the engine apart. I wondered what Bob Ashley would think of me doing this job behind a gas station next to the trash dumpsters.

#### **11.2.7.2B LEARNING TO BE AN AIR FORCE OFFICER-AUGUST 1953**

The cadets we met at MacDill were mostly from schools in the south, such as Clemson, Auburn, and Alabama. They were all white and seemed like polished southern gentlemen. This appearance was misleading.

Some of the nicest cadets had racist streaks that showed up most clearly at the racially integrated swimming pool. I was surprised to see these white cadets stay out of the pool as long as a black airman was in the pool and "contaminating the water". Others were even more careful. They stayed out of the pool an additional time to let the pool circulation system cleanse the water before they went in. They actually believed that the black airmen had contaminated the pool. I had never seen such racism before. And these weren't rednecks. They were gentlemen.

One of the memorable events was my first experience flying. We were taken up in the Air Force tanker transports and shown how air-to-air refueling worked. As part of the flying experience we were taught to put on parachutes and, if we had to jump over water, not to release the harness until "your head goes under the water". We were told that inexperienced people try to time their release from the harness so that it occurs just before entry. They then misjudge their height over the water and release from their parachute at a height of 200ft. These risks made flying exciting and fun.

We were organized into "Squadrons" of about 40 cadets who shared a barracks. An Air Force Captain was assigned to train our "squadron" of cadets. He made us stand for the daily roll call in the morning rain. Then he marched us to the mess hall in double time so we would sweat profusely in our already wet uniforms. Tampa in August is very humid all day long, but especially after the morning rain.



The first time I commanded the squadron through the marching drills routine, I was flawless. However, when I called the next leader out to take my place, I said, "so-and-so, front and center, please. " At the word "please" the Captain tore into me. "What do you mean, please? You are giving an order. There is no please!" Then I repeated the order without the please, and retreated to a back position in the squadron. (The memory of this reprimand helped me when I returned to Kansas)



**My Squadron with our mascot. I am at the center behind the goat**

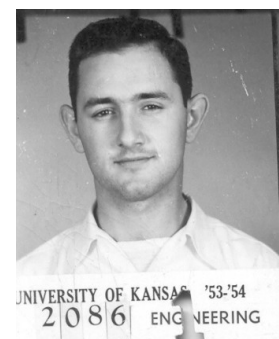
Our Captain disappeared a few days later. We learned that he had been ordered discharged as part of Eisenhower's downsizing of the military forces. We also learned that many June 1954 graduates might not receive their commissions. January 1954 graduates, like I hoped to be, were ok. But June commissions might be limited to those accepted to flying school. That was bad news for most of the people. It made them subject to the Army draft. The news made my transfer to Kansas and my 3 1/2 year plan look like another one of my many strokes of good luck.

### **11.3 MY SENIOR SEMESTER –FALL 1953**

I drove the Plymouth back to Kansas. I calculated that I had barely enough money to get through the semester, since my earning summer was shortened by ROTC camp.

I needed to take 19.5 hours of coursework plus 3 hours of ROTC to complete the requirements for graduation. I knew this heavy load would cause my grades to suffer. I didn't really care. I knew that the resumes I would give out at interviews would show only my prior grades, which were very good.

My new roommate was Del Jones. Del was from a small town in western Kansas. On our first day together he admitted to me that I was the first Jew he had ever met. And now he was



**My '53-54 ID photo.**



rooming with me, and I was the president of the fraternity. I asked him what he had thought a Jew would look like. He admitted that he didn't have a definite image, but from his Bible studies at a remote Methodist school, he thought Jews would look different.

### **11.3.1 LOOKING BEYOND GRADUATION FOR A JOB- FALL 1953**

I didn't know if the Air Force would call me to active duty after I graduated. I thought I would get a commission in the Air Force Reserve, but there was some chance I would not. As a commissioned reservist, I might or might not be called to active duty. So I also had to look for a civilian job while waiting for the Air Force to make up its mind. I interviewed a number of companies. Then I waited to see their responses. My Draft Board would, I knew, reclassify me accordingly.

### **1.3.2 MY LAST SEMESTER IN AIR FORCE ROTC-FALL 1953**

At the start of the 1953 fall semester, an incident led to my promotion in Air Force ROTC. The incident occurred at the first outdoors drill field exercise. We were divided into squadrons of about 50 cadets each. At a given signal, all of the other squadrons started into their marching drills. My squadron didn't have a squadron commander to lead it, so we just continued to stand around and chat.

One of my friends, Keith Hartell, was the overall Wing Commander. When he saw us standing around, he shouted to me to take command of the squadron and start it drilling. Since I had just come from summer camp at MacDill, I knew exactly how to do it. The squadron began marching in short order as if it had been practicing for weeks. Keith told me afterwards, without checking my poor ROTC grades, that he was promoting me from a mere Cadet to the rank of Squadron Commander.

The Air Force Captain in charge of Air Force ROTC called me to his office a few weeks later. He asked why my ROTC grades were so low when my other grades were so high. He said he had noticed my performance as a Squadron Commander and thought that I had great potential as an officer. I told him about the quality of the teaching I saw, and how I couldn't get myself motivated. He didn't argue.

The Captain called me in again a week later. He wanted me to choose between possible assignments he had found for me after I received my commission. My choice was the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) in Dayton, Ohio. This assignment offered me the chance to study for a Masters Degree in Electronics. I had to agree to serve for three years after eighteen months of schooling.





I was accepted by AFIT.

1. Commander, First Air Force  
was requested by letter on 4 December 1953 to accomplish  
orders assigning you to the United States Air Force Institute  
of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, with a  
reporting date of not earlier than 17 February 1954 nor no  
later than 17 February 1954.

**The text of my acceptance by AFIT**

**11.3.3 INDUSTRIAL JOB OFFERS-OCTOBER 1953**

RCA Princeton Labs and Bell Labs in Allentown Pa. had invited me to visit for interviews before I received the AFIT acceptance. I picked the days before the Thanksgiving weekend. The two companies shared my cost of flying from Kansas City on a TWA commercial flight.

The flight took six hours. The TWA airplane was a Lockheed Constellation, a sleek airplane shaped like a greyhound dog with a triple tail. In those early days of commercial flying, the stewardess jobs attracted women who might have been starlets from Hollywood or models from a modeling agency. On the plane they were just glamorous waitresses who served meals on the six-hour flight from Kansas City to New York. The penetrating drone of the engines rang in my ears for many hours after the flight.

I stayed at home and drove Bernie's car to both interviews. I liked both jobs and could have seen myself working at either one.

Several civilian job offers came in when I returned to Kansas. The salaries were roughly comparable. General Electric: \$4400 pa; Boeing: \$4300 pa; Chance Vought: \$4500 pa, Sperry: \$4800 pa, RCA: \$4800 pa.

I thought that my Air Force Commission was still a bit uncertain. So I didn't decline these offers.

**11.3.4 THE NUCLEAR POWERED NAVY-DECEMBER 1953**

My plans got more complicated when I was offered a job with the Nuclear Powered Navy that I didn't seek. The offer resulted from Dean Carr's effort to publicize the Engineering College at an Engineering Banquet in December of 1953.

The invited banquet speaker, Admiral Hyman Rickover, was once Dean Carr's Annapolis classmate. In 1953 he was nationally prominent as the father of the Nuclear Powered Navy.

Rickover, in exchange for speaking at Carr's banquet, made Dean Carr agree to let him recruit the six top engineering students for positions in the Navy's nuclear power program. I was one of the six top students that Dean Carr presented to Admiral Rickover.



Rickover and his assistant, Commander Roddis (later to be CEO of Consolidated Edison of New York), met with us individually for about fifteen minutes in a small office.

Rickover asked me: "What is the origin of your name? Where are you from? What is the origin of the name Bronx? What three books did you read last year? What did you learn from these books?...etc." He was looking for speed and quality of the response.

Roddis then asked whether I had any questions. I had two questions.

I asked whether I would be able to pass the national security requirements of the Navy nuclear power program. My parents, I said, were immigrants from Russia. I may still have relatives there, although I didn't know of any.

(The Russians were known to use threats to relatives in Russia as a way to coerce Americans of Russian descent to become spies for Russia. I wondered whether that would be a problem for me.)

Admiral Rickover answered my question. He said, "You are just like me. You won't have any problem."

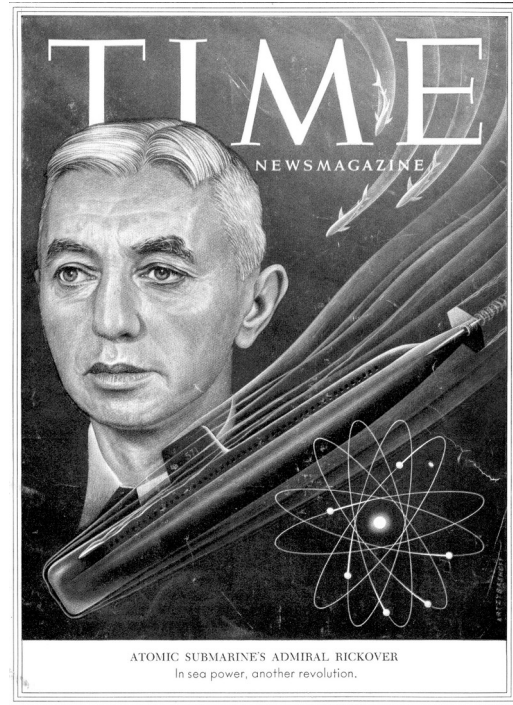
(Rickover's parents were immigrant Russian Jews, like mine.)

I also mentioned the Air Force's intention to send me to AFIT after I received my commission. I wondered how I would resolve the conflict. Roddis said they could work out a delayed call to duty with the Air Force so that I could work for the Navy.

I was one of the four seniors that Admiral Rickover selected to come to Washington to meet with his staff (Rickover rejected two of Dean Carr's six nominees.)

Dean Carr was glad to pay for our Washington trip. He provided a university station wagon and a faculty member to go to Washington with us. We left one afternoon and drove straight through. I don't know where we stayed, but we must have had a hotel stopover. This was my first visit to downtown Washington.

We found that the entire mall area that bordered on Constitution Avenue between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument was filled with single story wooden buildings that housed Navy and Air Force offices. A network of boardwalks



**Admiral Hyman Rickover**



connected the wooden buildings and Constitution Avenue. (This area was cleaned up when Charles E. Smith built Crystal City and the Navy moved there.) We walked over the boardwalk to one of these wooden buildings where we met with Admiral Rickover and his staff.

Our meeting with Admiral Rickover was brief, but long enough for us to see him chew out a Wave who had come in on her day off to give us books on nuclear chemistry. Her offense was that she had arrived a few minutes after we did.

His staff told us what we already saw. Rickover worked everyone very hard. He didn't expect his people to have much of a personal life. They loved the work, however.

Rickover told us to expect offers for jobs as nuclear engineers. Our first assignment would be to attend the School of Nuclear Reactor Technology at Oak Ridge, Tenn. We all returned to Kansas the next day, tired but excited, and loaded with books on nuclear engineering.

#### **11.3.5 LEGALIZING KRAVITZ-DECEMBER 1953**

The ROTC office called in early November to tell me that I had to be commissioned as Lawrence Krawitz, since that was the name on my birth certificate and thus my legal name. They suggested that I get my name legally changed to Kravitz.

The only lawyer that I knew who could advise me about getting my name changed was my business law professor, James Postma. He described the process to me and drew up the papers. We appeared before a judge on December 17th 1953.

My name was officially changed to Lawrence Charles Kravitz by the District Court of Douglas County, Kansas on December 28, 1953. Postma told me that I could pay him the legal fee whenever I had the money.

#### **11.3.6 AIR FORCE VERSUS NAVY-JANUARY 1954**

I received Rickover's Navy job offer, dated January 8, 1954.

**Dear Mr. Kravitz:**

You are hereby tendered an indefinite appointment with the Nuclear Power Division, Bureau of Ships, Navy Department as an Electrical Engineer, GS-5, \$3410 per annum. This letter serves as the official notification, which confirms the offer made during your recent interview with the Nuclear Power Division.

The Navy offer involved graduate school. So did the Air Force assignment. The Navy pay was far below the industrial offers I had, but was comparable to the pay of a Second Lieutenant. I still wanted the Air Force commission to protect me from the draft in case the Navy job didn't pan out. So I just let the situation play out.



The Navy wrote to the Air Force on January 11 asking that my call to duty be deferred. I wrote a similar letter on January 18. The Air Force response came on January 27:

- b. Documentary evidence presented:
1. Letter of Applicant, 18 January 1954.
  2. Letter of the Department of the Navy, Bureau of Ships, 11 January 1954.
- c. Summary of evidence:

Applicant will be commissioned 8 February 1954 (AFROTC, University of Kansas). He has been ordered to Active Military Service effective 17 February 1954 with assignment to USAFIT at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. As an electrical engineer he has been offered a position in the Nuclear Power Division of the Bureau of Ships, Department of the Navy, and he requests an indefinite delay in order to accept the position.

Delay must be denied on the grounds that indefinite delays are not authorized under Air Force Regulation 35-83 and also because applicant is not in fact employed by the Bureau of Ships.

This summary is a bit misleading. I still didn't have official orders to "Active Military Service". Nevertheless, I wrote letters to all of the companies that offered me a job, declining their offers with thanks. I assumed I was headed to the Air Force.

#### **11.3.7 COMPLETING THE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS- FEBRUARY 1954**

During the last semester, I had taken on three presidencies: our fraternity, KHK, the EE Honorary, HKN, and the IRE-AIEE Chapter. I was so busy with my job interviews and these extracurricular obligations that I didn't complete the requirements for graduation when the fall semester ended. I still owed a project report to erase an incomplete grade, and I needed to complete a correspondence course in Technical Writing. These requirements had to be completed before the date set for my Air Force commissioning, February 8.

I finished the Correspondence Course on February 5, and submitted the Project Report on the morning of February 8. Then I ran around the campus getting the required certifications that I had completed all of the requirements for graduation. My grade point average for that semester was only a 2.1/3.0. But it didn't matter. I was finished.

#### **11.3.8 LIEUTENANT KRAWITZ**

On February 8, 1994, a few hours after I had completed the graduation requirements, we had a brief ceremony in the ROTC building.

They took off my Squadron Commanders insignia and pinned on the Lieutenant's gold bars. I was commissioned as Lawrence Krawitz.



Although my name had been changed a month earlier, a copy of the court order wasn't available for another three months. My name stayed Krawitz until I produced that copy.

#### **11.4 LEAVING KANSAS- FEBRUARY 1954**

##### **11.4.1 MONEY**

My financial planning had, as usual, been too optimistic. I had so little cash for the trip back to New York and then to Dayton, Ohio that I had to leave an unpaid house bill for one month. I promised Lit Ning Ma, the KHK president who succeeded me, that I would pay it before the end of the school year.

##### **11.4.2 DRIVING TO NEW YORK-FEBRUARY 1954**

When I drove out of Lawrence, Kansas, I felt like I was floating on air. The last two months since the Rickover interview had been very intense. All those issues were now resolved. I was relieved to be finished with college and on my way, I thought, to a steady income. All I needed was the order to report for active duty.

I had enough cash to pay for the gas to travel to New York and Dayton. But not enough to handle any repairs to the car. Car problems were my only concern for the moment.

I decided to take a long route home to avoid paying the tolls on the Pennsylvania and Jersey Turnpikes. I took the northern route through upstate New York, stopping in Ithaca at Comell. I must have done some planning for this because I stayed in the fraternity house of Alex Neuwirth, an old friend from Hunts Point and PS 48. I also stopped off to see the basketball team. Only a few of our freshman were still playing. Everyone was amazed that I had graduated, had my commission, and was headed home while they still had a half-year or more to go. Some of them had also received the bad news that they wouldn't receive their Air Force commissions.

##### **11.4.3 WAITING FOR ORDERS-FEBRUARY 1954**

When I arrived home I found that little had changed, except that Mama seemed to be getting older.

Bernie was working at the dairy counter of a chain grocery store.

Joe was working in the city and living downtown. He worked as a draftsman with Caltex when he first came to New York. He didn't think that Caltex management knew what it was doing, so he shifted jobs. Then he worked at an accounting firm, but the accounting firm's management didn't know what it was doing. I was reminded of when Joe told Papa that he didn't know what he was doing in their painting business.

Mama insisted on taking the studio picture of me in my uniform with Joe, Mama, me, and Bernie (l to r).



I impatiently phoned the regional Air Force assignment office at Mitchell Field on Long Island every day. Their answer was always the same: the orders are coming, don't worry.

After what seemed a long wait, but was only four days, the telegram arrived on February 14: Report to the Air Force Institute of Technology, in Dayton, Ohio, by February 24.

("Presidential" telegrams were commonly used by the military. Orders began: "By direction of the President..." During wartime, parents of servicemen were notified of casualties by telegram. Those telegrams began: "The President regrets to inform you that (name) has been killed in action.")



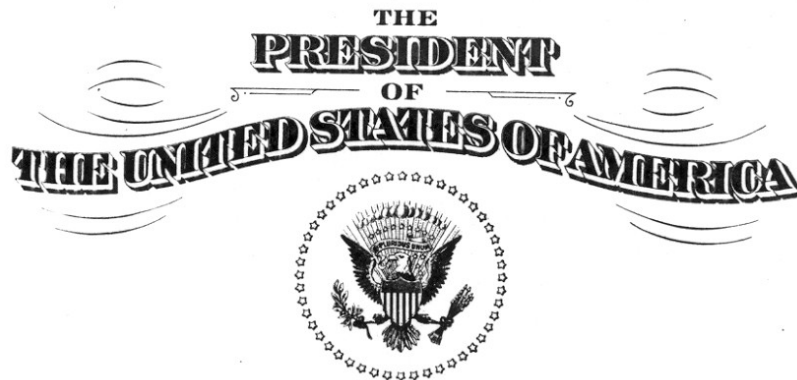
<b>CLASS OF SERVICE</b> This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.	<h1 style="margin: 0;">WESTERN UNION</h1> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT</p>	<b>SYMBOLS</b> DL=Day Letter NL=Night Letter LT=Int'l Letter Telegram VLT=Int'l Victory Ltr.
The following time shown in the above time zone and destination is of Eastern Standard Time, unless otherwise indicated.		
NBH224 LONG GOVT DL PD=LAB MITCHEL AFB NY 19 NPT= 2ND LT LAWRENCE KRAWITZ= AO 3019692 AFRES 874 MANIDA ST= <div style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">1954 FEB 14 PM 9 01</div>		
1AF RAD 2-206 BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT YOU ARE ORDERED INTO ACTIVE MILITARY SERVICE WITH THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE EFFECTIVE 23 FEBRUARY 1954 BY PARAGRAPH 11 SPECIAL ORDERS 33, THIS HEADQUARTERS 18 FEBRUARY 1954 YOU WILL PROCEED DIRECTLY TO HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY WRIGHT PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE DAYTON OHIO TO ARRIVE THEREAT NOT LATER THAN 24 FEBRUARY 1954 THIS TELEGRAM CAN BE USED FOR REPORTING PURPOSES.		

#### 11.4.4 RETROSPECT

The Air Force's refusal to let me work for the Navy was my dumb good luck. The field of commercial nuclear reactor technology, and many careers, died shortly



thereafter. I narrowly missed this fate. Instead, the Air Force headed me toward electronics. Later, in 1958, I again almost stumbled into a dead end career path.



*To all who shall see these presents, greeting:*  
*Know Ye, that reposing special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity*  
*and abilities of* LAWRENCE KRAWITZ *I do*  
*appoint* HIM, SECOND LIEUTENANT, RESERVE, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE *in the*

## United States Air Force

*to* DATE *as such from the* EIGHTH *day of* FEBRUARY *, nineteen*  
*hundred and* FIFTY FOUR *This Officer will therefore, carefully and diligently*  
*discharge the duties of the office to which appointed by doing and performing all*  
*manner of things thereunto belonging.*

*And I do strictly charge and require those Officers and other personnel of lesser*  
*rank to render such obedience as is due an officer of this grade and position. And*  
*this Officer is to observe and follow such orders and directions from time to time as*  
*may be given by me, or the future President of the United States of America, or other*  
*Superior Officers, acting in accordance with the laws of the United States of America.*

*This commission is to continue in force during the pleasure of the President of*  
*the United States of America, for the time being, under the provisions of these Public*  
*Laws relating to Officers of the Armed Forces of the United States of America*  
*and the component thereof in which this appointment is made.*

*Done at the City of Washington, this* EIGHTH *day of* FEBRUARY  
*in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and* FIFTY FOUR *and of the*  
*Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and* SEVENTY EIGHTH

*By the President:*

*E. D. Dorn*  
Lieutenant General, USAF  
Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel



*Harold G. S. Carter*  
Secretary of the Air Force



## 11.5 THE COURT ORDER: KRAWITZ TO KRAVITZ

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF DOUGLAS COUNTY, KANSAS

In the Matter of the Application of  
Lawrence Krawitz for Change of Name

No. 20,123

### JOURNAL ENTRY

Now and on this 17 day of December, 1953,  
the same being one of the regular days of the November, 1953,  
term of the District Court of Douglas County, Kansas, this matter  
comes on for hearing upon Petition of Lawrence Krawitz to change  
his name.

The Petitioner appears in person and by his attorney,  
James L. Postma. There are no other appearances.

Thereupon the Court examines the Notice published of  
this hearing, the Affidavit of publishing such Notice, and finds  
that such Notice was published for three consecutive weeks in the  
Lawrence Daily Journal World of Lawrence, Kansas, which newspaper  
is authorized by law to publish legal notices; that the date of  
the first publication of such Notice was more than thirty days  
from the date of this hearing; and the Court does hereby approve  
such Notice.

Thereupon the Court examines the Petition, hears evidence  
thereon, and being fully advised, finds that the statements therein  
contained are true. The Court finds that it has jurisdiction over  
the matter, and that the Petitioner has been a bona fide citizen  
of Douglas County, Kansas, for at least one year prior to the  
filing of the Petition. The Court finds that the Petitioner was  
born in New York, New York on July 27, 1932, and the record of his  
birth is Birth Record Number 10280, filed as Lawrence Krawitz in  
the Bronx office of the Bureau of Records and Statistics, Department  
of Health, City of New York, under date of August 5, 1932. The  
Court finds that there exists proper and reasonable cause for  
changing the name of the Petitioner to Lawrence Charles Kravitz,  
and that an order should be made to such effect.

IT IS THEREFORE BY THE COURT ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND  
DECREED that the name of the Petitioner, Lawrence Krawitz,  
be and the same is hereby changed to Lawrence Charles Kravitz.

Floyd H. Coffman  
Judge of the District Court



## **12 THE AIR FORCE (1954-1958)**

### **12.1 REPORTING FOR ACTIVE DUTY- FEBRUARY 1954**

I drove the fifteen-year-old Plymouth from the Bronx to the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) in Dayton, Ohio.

I expected AFIT to be like ROTC summer camp at MacDill. I expected to be given a dormitory housing assignment and shown the mess hall. I was wrong. There was no housing assignment and no mess hall. And I had no money.

Housing was not available on the base. I had to rent a room or an apartment somewhere off base. I also had to forage for my own food. I had never looked for an apartment before. I didn't know Dayton. I had no money for a down payment or for furniture or basic food and supplies. Most of my cash had been used to fill my gas tank.

I was rescued by two of my new classmates, Earl Halpern of Brooklyn, NY, and Jack Dickinson from Bisbee, Arizona. Earl and Jack were both First Lieutenants who had graduated from the Naval Academy three years earlier and were just coming back from their assignments in Korea. Facing the same housing problem that I faced, they had joined with two other First Lieutenants, Bill English and Bill French, in a search for a furnished apartment where they could all share expenses. Earl and Jack prevailed on the others to let me squeeze into the apartment the four of them were looking for.

We found a two-bedroom apartment off of North Main Street in Dayton. The landlord found a bunk bed for the bedroom that Earl, Jack and I shared.

I did get a little financial relief in the form of a uniform allowance. I used this cash to buy food and contribute to the first month's rent. I didn't need a new uniform immediately, since I could wear my blue ROTC uniforms until Memorial Day (when we changed into tans).

I paid off my bills to KHK and to my lawyer my second regular paycheck. By then I felt pretty good. My living arrangement seemed to leave me with money to spare. This flush feeling disappeared when I started to buy decent "civilian" clothes and a second and third uniform so that I could send one to the laundry. After some minimal expenses, I had much less surplus than I thought I would at first.

### **12.2 THE AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (AFIT)**

The Air Force Institute of Technology was an engineering school for Air Force Officers. Its mission was to train Air Force officers to manage its technical programs and weapons procurement activities.

This need for "blue-suit" professionals arose when the Army Air Corps was split off from the Army in 1948 to form the Air Force. At that time, the Army yielded very few civilian positions to go to the Air Force, and Congress refused to grant the Air Force the required civilian



manpower. Theodore Von Karmann, then the Chief Scientist of the Air Force, proposed that the Air Force develop its own corps of military technologists in lieu of the lost civilians. Since many of the officers were graduates of the military academies, the Air Force Institute of Technology was founded to provide a specially tailored curriculum to meet the needs of both the academy graduates and officers who had been out of school for a few years.

By the time I arrived, the school had grown to include an undergraduate engineering curriculum, graduate programs in electronics, aerodynamics, and weapons, and an engineering administration program.

### 12.2.1 AFIT MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 1954



**My AFIT class. I am at top-right. Earl Halpern is at lower left. Hans Peot is at lower center.**

I was assigned to the graduate class in electronics. One other student was, like me, fresh out of college. All of the rest had had a previous Air Force assignment. The senior officer was a major. We called him “major”. Everyone else was on a first name basis. But rank had little to do with our status as students. The professors didn’t make any distinctions.

The first quarter started off easy enough. Some of the courses were a review for me, but not for the others. Earl and Jack, for example, had been in Korea, while I had been in college. They were pretty rusty as students, and never really learned electronics at the Naval Academy. I became their tutor to help them catch up. I found that in helping them I also helped myself.

I began my tutoring in one of our first courses, Electricity and Magnetism. Our instructor was Bill Lehmann, a tall gawky fellow with a lot of strange mannerisms. He was amusing to watch, but Earl and Jack needed me to explain what he was teaching.

Bill Lehmann entered my life again, nineteen years later, in 1973. I was then at GE. He was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force in the Pentagon who had to approve my appointment as Director of Electronics at AFOSR. Two years later (1975), he became my boss as Director of AFOSR. He arranged for my assignment as a Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force. (While there I met Jack Martin who later recruited me for Bendix.) Three years after that, when he was leaving AFOSR, Bill Lehman nominated me to succeed him as Director. Bill Lehman had some traits I didn’t admire (He once told me that because I was Jewish I had to be careful about appointing other Jews. I didn’t ask him whether that was his appraisal of the system, or just his personal view.) He taught me how to work the



government bureaucracy...his understanding was uncanny. I never had anyone I could call a mentor, but Bill Lehmann came the closest.

### **12.2.2 MY THIRD CAR**

My income and expenditures stabilized by the end of the first quarter at AFIT. This was the first time in my life that I felt the security of having a regular income and could start saving. However, as money accumulated I began thinking of another car. My rusty 1939 car was not respectable in 1954, even in Dayton. One visit to the car dealers convinced me that I couldn't afford one.

Fortunately for me, my apartment mate, Bill English, was also looking for a new car. He offered to sell me his 1952 Dodge. Its one problem...it seemed to be leaking oil. I didn't think this was a serious problem. I bought the car from him.

My initial assessment was that oil was leaking through the oil pan gasket. Since the base had a completely equipped automotive hobby shop, I brought the car there and on one summer day I ground the valves, replaced the piston rings, and also fixed the gaskets. After the gaskets were tight I saw that the leak was really in a rear engine bearing. I didn't want to tackle the rear engine bearing, so I just let it leak. Fortunately, oil was cheap.

Later I discovered that the clutch was slipping. I replaced the clutch at the base hobby shop.

### **12.2.3 THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS-DISCOVERING JEWS**

One day in early September, Earl Halpern said to me "Larry, what are we going to do for the holidays". Earl was one of the funniest people I have ever met. He always had some joke up his sleeve, so you had to think before responding to him or risk being the butt of some joke of his. When I gave some neutral answer he persisted. "Look, the holidays are coming. We have to make plans. Are you going home?" Until that moment I hadn't considered Earl in a Jewish dimension. I soon learned differently.

Earl had grown up in Brooklyn, where his family had roots in the organized Jewish community. He participated in Jewish student life at the Naval Academy. In Korea, where a Jewish Chaplain organized events, he continued his observance of the holiday cycle. Now he was planning to contact one of the congregations in Dayton to ask if they had some seats available to military personnel, as he was sure they always did. He wanted to know if he should ask for a ticket for me.

I had never considered the possibility that the Jewish community outside of New York was any different than what I had seen there. The Hunts Point "shuls" were populated by transplanted Europeans with accents, both at the repulsive minyan where I went to say Kaddish, and at the Temple where I had my Bar Mitzvah. Meir's congregation was much the same. I had not been to the synagogues in Bertha's community, because she and Si were not affiliated and never attended those synagogues. Neither had I ever taken the trouble to investigate the congregations in Kansas City, since I imagined they were the same as the ones in New York. I couldn't imagine any synagogue welcoming an outsider as Earl was suggesting they would welcome us in Dayton.



So Earl Halpern's question caught me off guard. I was too embarrassed to give any other answer than "Sure, get me a ticket if they have any."

My eyes were opened when we went to the congregation on North Salem Avenue in Dayton. I learned that there was a whole Jewish world that I didn't know anything about. It was a lot more promising than what I had known in New York.

Earl again got us tickets to attend a community Seder at the same synagogue in the spring. The attendees were mostly older people who took a lot of interest in Earl and me. We sat at the far end of a long table and couldn't hear the rabbi. Fortunately the Seder was an abbreviated one.

Another time, Earl suggested that we sign up for some adult education courses that he had seen announced by the synagogue. I didn't know where he got these ideas, but I went along again. This personal contact with the rabbi, an American who spoke like a college professor, made a great impact on me. I discovered that an American Jewish community existed, and it was quite unlike the transplanted bunch of crude Europeans with whom I had only bad memories. I owe this reawakening to Earl Halpern. He knew about it and cared enough to draw me in.

#### **12.2.4 THE HOUSE ON NEEDMORE ROAD**

I was ordered to leave the apartment in October 1954. The base had completed the construction of a new Bachelor Officer Quarters (BOQ) and needed to fill the rooms with occupants. As one of the lowest ranking officers, I was ordered to move in.

The BOQ was located a short walk from the officer's club, the fitness facility and the golf course. I never went to the fitness facility or played golf, even though they were so close. We had no food service at the BOQ, so we ate in restaurants every night. I had my own room. It was a good place to study.

I lived in the BOQ for only three months. By December, I had earned enough seniority that I was allowed to leave.

Four of us, a classmate, Hans Peot, and two other AFIT students, Ed Jedrzejewski, Norb Gierke, began looking for a large enough furnished rental to accommodate us within our budgets. We found a four bedroom furnished house on Needmore Road in North Dayton. The house gave us plenty of space, including a basement. Needmore Road was a relatively quiet two-lane street, lined on both sides by modest single-family homes and tall trees. The house water was pumped from a well that was located under the basement floor. We moved into the house in early December.



**In front of the house on  
Needmore Road. December  
1954**





**December 1954-After having our wisdom teeth extracted.**

Later in December, during the school break, Hans and I decided to follow the base dentist's advice and have our wisdom teeth extracted. The dentist was a senior colonel who we believed, afterward, had lost his touch. We were both confined to the house while our bruised and swollen jaws recovered.

The spring weather brought a flock of noisy grackles to roost in the tall trees in front of the house. Hans got the idea that we could have some sport by trying to shoot the grackles out of the trees with beebee guns. Hans, Ed and I bought beebee guns and began to shoot at the grackles from the front steps after classes. We didn't have much success. Then we discovered the wild trajectories of the polished copper beebees by the sunlight reflected off of the beebee in flight. We concluded that the beebees generally rolled down one wall of the barrel, leaving the muzzle with sufficient spin that each shot was a curve ball in some unpredictable direction. A rare beebee went down the center of the barrel and had a chance of hitting the target.

A man down the street had a different approach to the grackles. He worked the midnight shift at the GM plant in Dayton. He was always trying to sleep at 4pm when the swarms of squawking grackles came to rest in his trees. His solution was to stand on his front walk and fire a shotgun blast straight up into his trees. Then, as the grackles flew off for that evening, he ran inside to avoid the falling leaves and twigs. His shotgun blast became our signal that it was time to start supper.



**Hans, Norb, Me, and Ed**

Hans set up his gunsmith shop in the basement. He bought a lathe from Sears and turned out a variety of barrels for pistols. He also loaded his own cartridges, weighing the gunpowder ingredients so that the bullets would be fired with specific muzzle velocities.

He took his guns and ammunition to the base firing range for testing. Ed and I bought .22 caliber rifles so that we could join him. While Hans was shooting through steel plate, Ed and I shot at tin cans. When Hans needed longer ranges, we found some empty land around town and set up tin cans for testing. I didn't like to fire Hans' rifles. They had too much kick for me. He laughed at me and said that they were the only guns that were useful to kill predatory animals "out home".

In the spring of 1955 some heavy rains backed the storm sewer up into our basement to a height of about two feet. When the water reached the height of the lip of our well, the storm water flowed down into the well. We probably never would have known about this except that Hans



had left a can of kerosene lathe lubricant uncapped on the basement floor under his lathe. The storm water floated the can until it tipped, releasing the kerosene to float on the surface of the water and then down into the well. We always tasted kerosene in the water after that storm until we moved out 14 months later. Ed went back to the house about a week after we moved to pick up any mail that hadn't been redirected to our new address. The new owners asked him whether we ever tasted anything strange in the drinking water. Ed said "never".

While Hans had his hobbies, and I studied more than the others, Ed spent his spare time apparently comatose in the soft chair in the living room. Norb Gierke, on the other hand, was a drunk. He passed his free time by getting drunk at the officer's club and other bars in town. After one of these nights out he came home and started shouting antisemitic slurs at me. He was only about 5ft 6inches and 150 pounds, and drunk. He said that he would fight me. I saw that Hans and Ed were embarrassed and didn't know where to turn. They probably wondered whether I would just beat him up. I just told them to put Norb bed. They did. No one ever mentioned that night to me again.

At one of Norb's bars he met a very pretty red headed barmaid who had just immigrated to the US from Ireland and still spoke English with a heavy, but cute, dialect. After they started talking about marriage, we joked that she only would want Norb for the citizenship. One Saturday night, after Norb had gotten drunk as usual at the officers club, he crashed his car at high speed into a parked General's car right in front of the club.

Norb suffered some rib damage but his Irish rose was thrown through the windshield. She needed about seventy stitches in her face alone. We went to visit her in the hospital and came away sickened to see what had become of her pretty freckled face. It was almost completely covered with brown stitches. After she healed and had some reconstructive surgery they were married. Norb moved out of the house. I never saw him again.

Years later I met Ed at the River Entrance to the Pentagon. He told me that Norb had committed suicide.

#### **12.2.4 AFIT- OCTOBER '54 TO SEPTEMBER '55**

I remember being stumped by only two subjects at AFIT. One was the Bessel Function solution for electromagnetic waves in a cylindrical pipe that I mentioned earlier. I finally understood this.

The second subject was Information Theory. This was an elective course that four of our class decided to take during our last quarter. A Major who had just returned from a study assignment at Stanford University taught the course. Although he tried hard to work us through his Stanford notes, we concluded that he really didn't understand the material well enough to teach it. We all got the grades we wanted, but we didn't learn much. As luck would have it, having Information Theory on my transcript was



**July 1955- My AFIT file photo.**



more important than knowing the subject. Three years later, in 1958, my life was radically transformed when someone saw Information Theory on my transcript.

My master's thesis was not very satisfying. It dealt with the computation of the electromagnetic fields around an antenna in a rectangular waveguide. My advisor claimed to be an expert in electromagnetic theory, but when my calculations didn't predict what I measured, he didn't understand why. I was still mystified by radiation and antennas, but now I at least understood the theory a bit better.

#### **12.2.5 THE HOUSE ON WOODLEY ROAD- JULY 1955 to DECEMBER 1956**

Norb Gierke moved out of the house on Needmore Road in June of 1955. The owner also had found a customer to buy the property. Hans, Ed and I had to move.



**The Woodley Road house. Our unit is on the left. My Chevy is in front.**

We found an unfurnished apartment, with air conditioning, in a two family house on Woodley Road. Hans and I shared a bedroom. We built a double deck bed out of 2x4s. I bought a steel file cabinet that doubled as a chest of drawers. Ed recovered a kitchen set that he had in his first apartment before the BOQ. I can't recall where we got a few pieces for our living room. We had just barely enough furniture to make the place livable.

Seventeen years after I moved from Needmore Road, in 1972, the Kravitz family (Marge, Larry, and three boys) was returning eastward to Schenectady along Interstate 70 from our own trip to the western national parks. I decided to take a detour down Needmore Road on our way to visit the Air Force Museum at Wright Field.

When I announced that I planned to show the boys where I lived when I was in the Air Force, their synchronized response from the back of the station wagon was "Oh, Pop."

When I got to the place where the house was supposed to have been, I found that "Oh, Pop." was right. Needmore Road had been widened to four lanes in the intervening seventeen years. It had been regraded and was now almost a bypass around Dayton. All of the houses and trees had been demolished so that I couldn't even tell where the house had been. I have been by there several times since then, and I still can't figure out where that house was located.

Joe's letter arrived soon after we moved in. He was going to marry Betty Still. I read the letter in the kitchen and was so excited that I immediately sat down and wrote a check to him. I knew he would need some extra money, he always did. I had been loaning him money so that he could study accounting. The check was something extra.



Joe and Betti were married on June 1, 1956. I wasn't there, and I don't remember why. Betti had converted to Judaism. I hoped she would avoid the excommunication that been imposed on Ethel, but I wasn't sure that conversion would be good enough. (For Ethel, see 6.2.7. She married Peter Xenos in 1942. He was a Greek Orthodox man. Only Bernie kept in touch with her afterward. See the family tree in Section 3.)

### 12.2.5 AFIT GRADUATION-SEPTEMBER '55

I was due to graduate from AFIT in September 1955, after six quarters and 93 credit hours. My grade point average of 3.83/4.0 earned me the honor of "Distinguished Student" The only other such honoree out of about 75 graduate engineering students was Gerry Bunker, a classmate. When I told Mama that I was going to get this honor, she decided to attend the graduation ceremony. I couldn't talk her out of it. She took the train to Dayton. I took her to a motel near the base. The next day I took her to the graduation ceremony.

Most of the officers were married and on their second or third assignment. AFIT was just another training assignment to them. While many wives attended the graduation, Mama was the only parent I saw.

Mama had always been suspicious of the military, probably from Russia, but she was very impressed by my recognition as a "Distinguished Student". When I introduced her to some of the officers and faculty, she kept repeating to each one: "I raised him myself, he had no father."

I drove Mama back to New York. Throughout the trip Mama kept aggravating over what she perceived as slights from people over the years.

No one escaped. She kept asking me why so and so would have said something, or done something that Mama remembered as being hurtful to her. I had no answers. Most of the things she remembered seemed trivial to me. She kept going on and on. It made for a long trip. I was glad when we got to Manida Street. I should have recognized that something was wrong, but didn't.

I stayed in the Bronx only a couple of days. Ed Jedrziwski and I had planned a month- long trip to celebrate our graduation. I drove back to Dayton to meet him. Then we drove west in Ed's car on a grand tour of the National Parks. We saved money by camping and staying at Air Force bases along the way. After three weeks, we stopped off to visit Hans and his family at their ranch in Washtucna, Washington, near Spokane.

Hans had always talked about their ranch "out home", but I had to see it to believe it. The Peots raised wheat on a farm that stretched for about ten miles in each direction. They owned several



First Lt. Lawrence C. Kravitz, 874 Manida Street (right), is being congratulated upon his graduation as a Distinguished Student from the electronics course at the Air Force Institute of Technology. The Bronxite is a 1954 graduate of the University of Kansas.

**Photo and caption from the New York Post**



very large tractors that were used in tandem to disc plow or harvest a swath a hundred yards wide. For recreation, they sat on their front porch and shot their high-powered rifles through telescopic sights at rocks 500 yards away. Hans, his brother, and two sisters vied for recognition as the best marksman.

In spite of its size, Hans claimed that the ranch wasn't big enough to support two families. His older brother had studied agriculture at Washington State University. He planned to operate the ranch. Hans planned to make his living in engineering.

Ed and I reported to our new assignments when we returned from our trip. My orders directed me to the Electronic Components Laboratory.

### **12.3 ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS LABORATORY-SEPTEMBER '55-JANUARY-58**

Four major laboratories were located at Wright Field. The Aeronautical Laboratory dealt with aircraft design technology, The Propulsion Laboratory dealt with engines, The Materials laboratory addressed advanced structural materials, and the Avionics laboratories dealt with the aircraft electronics. The Electronic Components Laboratory was one of the Avionics Laboratories.

These so called laboratories had been the sites of experimental efforts during World War II. By 1955 the work had been contracted out and was done in the contractors' facilities. The "Laboratories" were mostly involved with managing those contracts.

The Advanced Development Branch of the Electronic Components Laboratory was different. It was actually an operating laboratory. That was where I was assigned to work.

#### **12.3.1 THE ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT BRANCH**

The Branch was managed by Captain Henry Triwush. The second highest ranking officer was Lieutenant Jay Hirshfield. Both of these officers were Jewish. The rest of the staff of this laboratory were all former German Nazis.

I went to work in the Microwave Tube Section, headed by Jay Hirshfield. Jay had graduated from AFIT in the class of 1954. He had received a BS in Physics at the University of Maryland and, like me, had come into the Air Force through ROTC. Years later I learned that his family had been members of Bnai Israel Congregation. The Microwave Tube Section consisted of Jay, me, Oscar Heil, a machinist and a glassblower.

#### **12.3.2 THE GERMANS**

Jay told me how the Germans came to the laboratory. Toward the end of WW II, the Americans and British invaded Germany from the west while the Russians invaded from the east. As these armies moved forward, each of the intelligence services grabbed all of the German scientists that they could. The Russians wanted to capture German scientists to support their postwar plans. The Americans and British grabbed scientists to deny them to the Russians.



The captured German scientists were starving along with the population at the war's end. They actively sought capture just to survive. Many of them lied to intelligence officers to enhance the capabilities they offered. The VonBraun group that built the Army's Redstone missile were one such group that the Americans grabbed.

The Germans who were brought to Dayton were thought to bring electronics expertise. They were first brought into the United States in 1945 as "prisoners of war". The Army put them in a guarded compound, with their families, right on the base, until their status was changed to "immigrant". To accomplish this the Army secretly transported the Germans into Canada. As they walked back across the border into the US, the Immigration Service officially declared them immigrants. In exchange for this immigrant status they had to agree to work for the Army for ten years. In 1955, when I joined the lab, their ten-year contracts were expiring and some had started to leave.

I had very little discussion with the Germans about their roles during the war, but Jay said that he did when he first came to his job. They all claimed to be just scientists in universities or research establishments, doing research that had no impact on the war effort. They were Nazis because everyone in their positions was required to join the party. It was an employment condition, not an ideological position. They knew nothing about what was happening to the Jews. They were as helpless as anyone. I didn't know whether to believe it or not.

My machinist, Franz Ruf, had been a production machine designer in the Messerschmitt fighter aircraft factory. Toward the end of the war Germany agreed to help build a Messerschmitt factory in Japan. Franz and a number of Messerschmitt engineers were sent to Japan in a submarine to start work. While they were in the submerged submarine heading south in the North Atlantic, the submarine commander received the news that Germany had surrendered unconditionally. The commander took the submarine into a steep dive and headed toward where he thought the American zone of the Atlantic would be. Then he surfaced the submarine, opened the stocks of food and liquor so that everyone could get drunk, and just floated until American Naval forces captured them.

As I got to know them, the Germans told me stories of their own deprivation during the war...but they never admitted knowing anything about the Jews and never mentioned even questioning the roundup of the Jews. It was a subject that was out of bounds.

Jay had worked most closely with Oscar Heil. Heil had claimed credit for the invention before the war of a vacuum tube that was used for radars during the war. Some people think that his wife actually invented the tube but, since she had left him to go to Russia, Heil claimed the credit. In the US, the Varian brothers were credited as the inventors of the tube in California. All of the US war technology was based on the work of the Varians.

Heil had used a pre-war patent to convince US intelligence that he was worth capturing. As far as I could tell he spent the ten years since his arrival in trying to enrich himself by promoting his patents to tube manufacturers before the patents expired. The industry seemed to ignore him. They used a design by John Pierce at Bell Labs.



Heil had a disarming way of discussing any topic in electronics and physics. He used qualitative arguments and hand waving to make difficult concepts seem simple and obvious. He was Jay Hirshfield's hero and idol. Jay tried to explain things just like Heil and adopted many of his mannerisms. I had never met anyone who could "explain" so much as Heil, and soon I fell under his spell too. I undertook a laboratory project to build and test some of Heil's electron focussing schemes...we called them "electron guns".

Heil left Wright Field in December of 1955, a few months after I joined the group, to join the Eitel-McCullough company (EIMAC) in California. EIMAC was a major manufacturer of the tubes that could use Heil's electron gun. I was left to proceed on my own.

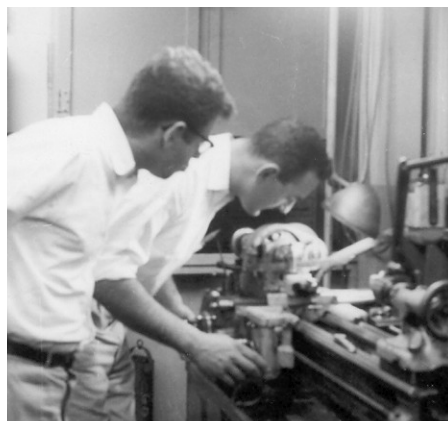
### 12.3.3 THE BOY SCIENTISTS

Jay's interest paralleled that of another German scientist, Gustav Medicus. Gus Medicus had been a professor in Germany. His research in plasmas followed the work he had done in Germany. He was a prolific publisher of papers, and Jay was his editor.

The truth is that neither Jay nor I had the background to define and carry out any significant research program on our own, even given the excellent experimental facility.

While Jay drifted toward Medicus and plasmas, I just drifted, trying to understand electron focussing systems and their design. Fortunately for me, we had two contracts that Heil had started that were left for us to manage. One was with Ohio State University for research on very short wave tubes. Heil had funded this contract to demonstrate the use of his invention in short wave tubes. The results weren't very convincing. The second contract was with The University of California at Berkeley.

John Whinnery was the director of the University of California contract. He was also the author of an outstanding book in electromagnetic theory, and an expert on electronic tubes. One task in his contract required him to spend one week each summer consulting with us in Dayton. This may have been interesting when Heil was there, but without Heil he wasn't needed. During my first summer, I used Whinnery's visit as an opportunity to work some of the problems in his textbook and get some comments from him on my approach. This was good for me, but unprofitable for Whinnery and the Air Force. We cancelled the consulting task in his contract after that first summer.



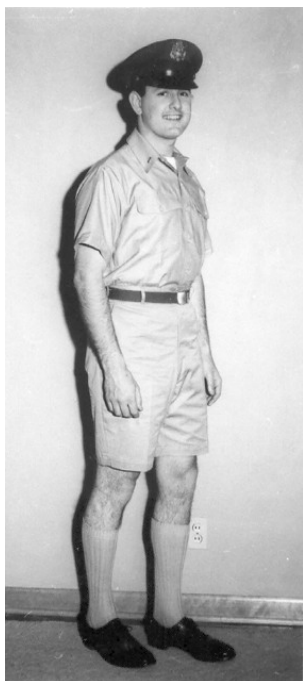
**I am operating the lathe. Jay is supervising.**

I learned a lot from the personal contact with Whinnery. Whinnery knew everything that Heil knew, but Whinnery could describe things mathematically. Heil could only argue plausibly how they would turn out. I could see why so many of the leading scientists in the tube industry admired John Whinnery. By contrast I had seen Heil stand up to comment at a conference, and how his comments had been ignored. Heil always said that the Americans didn't really understand the physics, and got too wrapped up in the mathematics. After my short time with



John Whinnery I wondered whether Oscar Heil might be a phony. I never shared these thoughts with Jay.

### 12.3.3 THE ELECTRONICS EXPERTS



Summer shorts- 1956



Winter Blues:1957

Since I had to manage contracts in microwave tubes, and since the name of our section was the Microwave Tube Section, I had to learn more about microwave tubes. I found that the description of these tubes starts with a differential equation for the complex motions of electrons, and that I couldn't handle the differential equations. This forced me to try to explain the tube operation the way that Heil explained it, qualitatively. This was only a crutch for my weakness. But I was helpless. In fact, without thinking about it, and probably influenced by Jay, I too had become a like Heil. I tried to explain everything without using mathematics because I couldn't handle the mathematics. This was a bad habit that I only shed in graduate school, with some difficulty, a few years later.

Jay and I were considered the microwave tube experts at Wright Field. Any industrial or university scientist interested in getting Air Force funding for research in microwave tubes had to come to us. Another section of the Electronic Devices Laboratory was devoted to development of tubes, as compared to tube research. I soon learned that they knew even less than we did. Scientists therefore sent us their unsolicited proposals, or came in to make a presentation. Sometimes we were invited to be part of a team to review a project at the contractors laboratory.

My life was forever changed by an unsolicited proposal we received from Professor Paul Coleman of the EE Department at the University of Illinois in December of 1955. Coleman was seeking funding to generate very high frequency radio waves with relativistic electrons. First, Jay asked me to review the proposal. Then Jay decided that we should go to visit Coleman, just to be certain about what he was proposing. I couldn't figure out what we would do if he did "have something", because we didn't have more money for new projects. Then Jay suggested that, as long as we were going to be there, he would arrange for blind dates. It seems that Jay's mother knew a woman whose daughter was a student at the University of Illinois. Then I understood why we "had to" visit Coleman.

### 12.3.4 MEETING MARJORIE HELMAN-JANUARY 1956

Jay's mother's friend's daughter wasn't available. As a concession, the daughter arranged for two sorority sisters to be our dates. Our dates decided beforehand that they would match up with us



by height. The taller one, Marge Helman, would match up with the tall one named Larry, and the shorter one, Irma Scheinwald, with Jay. Larry and Jay were not given a choice in the matter.

We went out on a cheap date to an officer's club at a nearby Air Force Base. There I learned that Marge claimed to be a champion beer chug-a-lugger. The rest is history.

Paul Coleman's proposal was not funded by the Air Force.

A few weeks later, at the end of January of 1956, Marjorie Helman transferred to the University of Chicago. I had to travel to Chicago if I wanted to see her again. I talked Jay into such a trip in February of 1956. By then, with the pay raise I had gotten by promotion to First Lieutenant and my projected income from teaching, I had traded in my 1952 Dodge for a used 1955 Chevy. We drove to Chicago in my "new" car.

We planned to drive to Chicago on a Saturday afternoon, go out to some downtown night club that was in vogue, and then drive directly back to Dayton. Jay's date was Sybil Stern (later Sybil Mervis).

Marge recommended a club on Rush Street in Chicago. This is where "everyone went". This was not a cheap date.

As we were driving Marge home, I noticed that my battery wasn't charging properly. After dropping her off, we drove around, through some sleazy neighborhoods, looking for an all night garage where I could get the alternator or current regulator checked. When we didn't find one, we went back to her neighborhood, parked the car and went to sleep.

The next morning we called her house from a pay phone to see if we could get some advice on car repair places. The tone of her voice when she answered was "What, are you still here?". I could see that she wasn't in the mood to be helpful. Fortunately for us her mother intervened and invited us to the house. I was greasy from fiddling under the hood and was glad to have the chance to clean up. Marge seemed to have another date and was anxious to shoo us out of there. After we sat around the kitchen table for a while, and got several strong hints to go...Marge may have reluctantly offered us coffee...if so, probably at the urging of her mother..we finally left.

We thought that the remaining charge on the battery might be sufficient to run the ignition long enough for us to get back to Dayton, but the battery would not support the headlights too. We drove at 50 mph and arrived just before the early February dusk would force us to use headlights. Judging from the cold reception we got from Marge on that Sunday morning I wasn't sure I should call her again. I got the generator repaired. Then, sometime later, I called her.

#### **12.3.5 THE MOONLIGHTING TEACHER- FEBRUARY 1956-JANUARY 1957**

My job in the Microwave Tube Branch did not keep me busy all day. I also had lots of free time at night. I was therefore attracted by the chance to teach at the University of Dayton evening session, when I learned of an opening there. I applied to the Chairman of the EE Department, Brother Rose. (UD is run by the Marist order of the Catholic Church). Starting in February 1956



I began to teach a sophomore course in electric circuit theory at night. Brother Rose introduced me to the class as "Brother" Kravitz.

My classroom had a crucifix over the blackboard. I was supposed to start each class with a prayer. I ignored both the crucifix and the prayer requirement.

My students were mainly mechanical engineers who were employed during the day at the National Cash Register Company. NCR's cash register products were mechanical gadgets, with mechanical dollar flags showing in a window, mechanical buttons to enter the charges, and a motor to open the cash drawer and print the receipt. The transistor was still some time from real application, but counting tubes and miniature vacuum tubes like the ones I worked on at RCA were being introduced into some NCR products. These electronic innovations lessened the need for mechanical engineers to design gears and spring systems. My students were trying to make a mid-career transition from mechanical engineering to electronics. From their stories I never thought that NCR would ever compete in electronic machines.

I also saw how difficult and ineffective a part time education after hours was. They couldn't concentrate on the coursework and do the homework assignment. Their jobs, or a "sick baby" at home, always seemed to keep them from devoting the required effort. I wanted to give homework problems to see what, if anything, they were learning. But I knew I couldn't give too much homework or I wouldn't get any back. The homework I did get back confirmed my suspicions that they weren't learning very much.

A large number of the so called engineers that worked for the Air Force at the Electronic Components Lab also didn't know much about electronics. The labs had employed many competent civilians during World War II, but by 1955 many of the better people had retired or gone into industry, leaving their technicians to inherit their positions.

I, along with another officer in our Branch, Major Douglas Netherwood, decided that we should do something about the civilian situation. We approached the laboratory commander, a Colonel, with the idea of establishing some courses for the civilians. A few days later the Colonel told us that he couldn't authorize the courses during the day. The people's job descriptions assumed that they knew the material, and he couldn't require the civilians to stay after hours without extra pay. So nothing was done.

I taught the same electronics course at UD again in the Fall of 1956. This time the equivalent course was not offered in the day session. Half of my students were therefore full time day students. The rest were the NCR engineers. The two groups were like night and day. At the end of the semester my student evaluations were as polarized as the students. The day students gave me a high rating, while the NCR students said I went too fast or used too much mathematics.

I also did my own evaluation. I decided that teaching after hours is hard work. I had to talk continuously for ninety minutes straight, twice a week. This was hard on my sinuses. I often came home with a splitting headache. After two semesters I called it quits.



### 12.3 THE ROAD TO MATRIMONY



**Spring 1957 - At the Chicago Lakefront**

I don't remember all of the events leading up to my decision to propose marriage. I went to Chicago a lot. Marge always treated me to a fine dinner with Bob and her father. They told me that the only time that Marge made them a decent meal was when I came, so they were glad to see me. Since I was going to Chicago every other week I began to use the train from Dayton to Chicago. This was easier on me and gave me time to grade my papers.

Bob was in law school at the time. One weekend he entertained his classmates with a dinner that Marge prepared, followed by what looked to me like a lot of drinking. They seemed to be a WASPy bunch, and Bob seemed to try to copy their ways.

When Bob heard that I had played basketball, he challenged me to some one-on-one. I brought my sneakers, a T -shirt and a bathing suit to play in. He came in a matched set.

I tried not to score too much and to give him a chance at a few baskets. I was black and blue afterwards from the hacking. That was the last time he asked to play. The same thing happened when we played tennis for the one and only time during that period. I played with the racquet Marge used when she was twelve years old. Same result this time, except without the black and blue marks.

On Sundays we visited the Weisses or the David Lapportes. The Weisses used to make a fuss over how much I could eat. ...sort of an eating phenom. I used to nosh heavily on the pickles but not too much otherwise. Marge's father usually took a seat in a corner easy chair and remained silent for the couple of hours we were there. Once in a while someone, usually Nate Weiss, would ask him what he thought. He would make his pronouncement and then be silent again. Uncle Dave was always after me to have some schnapps with him.

Marge made fun of my socks. I had only two kinds of socks. My black socks were worn with my uniform. For casual wear I wore white wool socks. This seemed reasonable to me, but not to her. She insisted that white wool socks were for sports, and that I needed dark socks for casual wear. I knuckled under.

When I found that I couldn't wait for her next letter or our next phone call, and I wanted to be in Chicago all of the time, and not go back to Dayton, then I figured that those were all of the signs that it was time to marry the girl...but how to go about it?



I shopped for a ring in the jewelry stores in downtown Dayton. There were about four jewelry stores in a row. I was surprised at how expensive diamonds were. Each salesman pointed out the minor flaws in their own diamonds, and always added the warning that the other stores would try to sell me poor goods. Finally I found a stone in a setting that I could afford. A salesman named Smith showed it to me. He allowed me to take it to one of the other stores for an appraisal. I bought the ring from him after checking it out. The price of the ring wiped out a good fraction of my meager savings.

After Marge and I were married we attended holiday services in Dayton. To my surprise, my diamond salesman, Mr. Smith, greeted us as an usher in a tallis. We recognized each other with big smiles. Many years later I learned that the bride normally had a hand in picking the diamond. How was I supposed to know that? How could I have afforded it?

On my next visit I proposed while we were sitting on the sofa in the living room of their apartment on Chicago's south side. She accepted, but only provisionally. She wouldn't accept the ring. I had to ask her father.

He was prepared for the conversation the next day. He asked my plans. I told him I wanted to go to graduate school. Then he said "ok". He said that I "came highly recommended." "By who", I asked. "By Marge's mother", he responded. The conversation couldn't have taken more than thirty seconds. (I had met Marge's mother only twice, once on the night of our first date in Chicago, and then on the next morning when we came to wash up and sat at the kitchen table. She died several weeks later. I had apparently left a good impression.)

I can't recall when I started calling him "Dad". It may have been around this time. I had no problem with this, and neither did he seem to. In fact, the more I knew him the more I liked calling him Dad. He was certainly closer to my own image of a father than the one I had a fleeting memory of. Marge told me that Bob once told her that Dad and I were more alike than Dad and Bob were. I took this as a form of flattery.

One Friday night during winter vacation, Marge participated in a college reunion night at Rodfei Zedek. She was up on the stage with some other college students discussing Jewish life on campus when I arrived from the train. Dad had saved a seat for me to the left of his in the back of the room, which was filled with parents. I was still in my uniform. Marge made some wisecracking comment about parents wanting college to be a wedding mill. This caused a ripple of laughter in the audience. Then a woman sitting nearby said, in a very loud voice, "Nate, who is she going to marry?" I watched the heads turn as a hundred eyes stared at Nate for his answer. He didn't say a word. He just lifted his left hand and pointed at me with his thumb. Then the hundred eyes shifted over to examine me and my uniform. The eyes raked me up and down until I smiled at them. Then they turned away. I thought Dad was as pleased to be with me as I was to be with him.

The next question was when should we be married. Since Marge had another year of school to finish, we decided to wait until June of 1957. This gave us plenty of time to decide about some furniture that we had to buy, all of the wedding arrangements, and all of the gift lists that she had to make up. Whenever we went to a department store and were obviously pondering a piece of



furniture, we sensed people giving us "greasy smiles". The main pieces of furniture that we picked out were our bedroom set (that we still have), a sleep away sofa, and a living room chair.

(Many years later we left this chair on the front steps of our house in Rockville for the Goodwill pickup. It disappeared before the Goodwill truck came. Jean Kelso took it for Robert to use in his room at college. )

## **12.5 MAMA WAS HOSPITALIZED-SUMMER OF 1956**

Later in the summer of 1956 I began to get calls from Bertha and Martha about Mama. Finally, one call told me that Mama had been committed to Bellevue Hospital for psychiatric treatment. When I got to New York, I was sickened to see Mama in this big hospital. The woman doctor who was treating her wouldn't give me any information except that she was on sedatives. I tried to figure out what had happened. I shuttled between Rockaway, Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx talking to everyone. Si wanted to "kick Joe out of the family". Bertha and Martha were so subsumed with their own family survival that they couldn't spare time for Mama. Similarly for Bernie, and he bore the brunt of the impact. Joe and Betty had a more studied and intellectual outlook. I never understood exactly what had happened. The one settled fact was that Joe had committed Mama to Bellevue Hospital. I probably had seen the start of the problem during my drive with her back from Dayton, when she continually aggravated. Joe's wedding must have also had some precipitating influence. I never learned what else happened.

I went back to the Manida Street apartment to try to come up with some other course of action. I made a number of phone calls to other hospitals to understand admission arrangements and costs. Then I realized that the costs of hospitalization were so high that no one in the family was capable of stepping in to assume responsibility. I saw the family in a new light. In spite of their education and the general post war prosperity that I had seen everywhere, the members of my own family were all barely surviving. The general prosperity had passed them by. They couldn't help Mama. And neither could I.

Mama stayed in Bellevue and then was transferred to Governor's Island for an extended recovery. She was still there by the time Succoth came. By then Marge and I were engaged to be married. I invited Marge to New York to meet the family during Succoth, but she didn't meet Mama. Mama was released from the Governors Island Hospital later that fall. She went back to living with Bernie on Manida Street. She was very weak from the hospitalization and never recovered her earlier strength.



I must have first told Mama that I was getting married in late December of 1956. She wrote a letter to me, dated January 2, 1957. The letter and a translation appear below.

January 2nd 1957

Dear son Larry

you are so wonderful thanks for  
calling on the telephone I wish  
you be happy with as I am.  
Bernie is different than you or  
Joe. and I am happy with him  
as he is. He is slow but sure  
we have to have patients and  
wait and see! there is nothing  
else that I can do. Dear son  
I am very happy that got a partner  
in life you love her and she  
loves you! that you are filling  
your spare time with ~~some~~ one  
to plan your life but do it  
praktikal Don't make any mistakes

I am all excited for you and  
wish you happy new year an' all  
I am filling fine. every day  
I fill better and better.  
except I do get tired from the  
steps but I am well enap to get  
over it very fast Much faster  
than when you was home.  
you send me your new  
adres don forget mail it  
right away. with love your  
Mother brother Bernie I  
am sure he is happy with  
all your happiness  
Mother



January 2, 1957

Dear Son Larry,

You are so wonderful. Thanks for calling on the telephone. I wish you be happy with as I am.

Bernie is different than you or Joe. And I am happy with him as he is. He is slow but sure. We have to have patience and wait and see! There is nothing else that I can do.

Dear son, I am very happy that got a partner in life. You love her and she loves you! That you are filling your spare time with someone to plan your life. But do it practically. Don't make any mistakes.

I am all excited for you and wish you a happy new year and healthy.

I am feeling fine. Every day I feel better and better, except I do get tired from the steps. But I am well enough to get over it very fast, much faster than when you was home.

You send me your new address. Don't forget. Mail it right away.

With love,

Your Mother.

Brother Bernie, I am sure he is happy with all your happiness.

Mother

## 12.6 WEST MET EAST-SUCCOTH OF 1956

Marge flew into Lagueardia Airport. I was waiting for her right where I was supposed to be, but I couldn't see her because of the crowd of people. Suddendly I was hit from behind and thrown forward by someone trying to tackle me around the waist. I felt the hands in front of me...it was Marge. We went out to the Ostrinskys where she met Martha and Meir and the kids.

Marge and Meir were Chicago "landsmen". Meir was pleased to learn that his old classmate was the rabbi of her old synagogue, but disappointed that his friend had allowed mixed seating of the sexes. When he found that Marge now belonged to a Conservative synagogue, he told her that only orthodox rabbis are true rabbis, the conservative rabbis are preachers and teachers, while the reform rabbis are only preachers. He let her know that the first commandment is to " be fruitful and multiply".

Marge helped Meir assemble the frail succah that he attached to the garage behind their house on 24<sup>th</sup> Street. It must have been a late succoth, because we froze while eating in the succah that night.

After the first two days of Succoth we visited the Spielmans in their Far Rockaway apartment, and Joe and Betty in theirs in Manhattan.

Joe and Betti had invited another couple that evening. Their conversation was centered on the New School for Social Research and all of the great courses it offered. They made the New School sound like a place where they all were very involved. After about an hour of listening silently to this, I asked what courses any of them had taken there. The answer was none. My , question seemed to snuff out that conversation. The other couple got up and left. We left shortly thereafter. Since then Marge and I have used the "New School" as a code word for pointless small talk.



## **12.7 1956-1957...A LONG YEAR**

### **12.7.1 NOTICING TECHNOLOGY CHANGE**

As my work brought me into increased contact with the scientific community, I began to recognize that there were rankings of schools and companies. I found that the real science was done at Columbia, MIT, Stanford, Berkeley and Harvard, Illinois and Michigan..etc. The lesser schools like Kansas didn't do science. The professors at the top schools were very impressive. They were the leaders in their fields and their students went to the best companies...like Bell Labs, RCA, Hughes, and GE. I saw that many of the technical problems that I struggled with were actually just first year graduate subjects at these top schools. I became convinced that if I wanted to be able to read the journals, understand the talks at conferences, and do science myself, I had to go to a graduate school that was on the leading edge of technology change.

I also noticed, starting in 1956, that people were starting to leave the field of microwave tubes for other research areas. People from Bell Labs were leaving for teaching positions. I thought that it was strange that one of the leaders of tube research at Bell Labs had left to join a Bell affiliate in Maryland to work on communication from space. I didn't know what that was about and didn't have the wit to inquire. I wondered whether these people felt that microwave tubes might not be a field with a future. But my knowledge was too limited to know what field had a future. Technology change was easy to see in retrospect, but hard to predict.

### **12.7.2 THE END OF VACUUM TUBES**

I was actually involved with technology change myself, but didn't know it. In mid-1956 we were directed to find a contractor to develop technology for high temperature vacuum tubes. The Air Force had started applying computer technology to fighter aircraft, but found that when the vacuum tubes were packed together in a small volume, their heat caused the temperature to rise above the softening temperature of the glass vacuum tubes. The Air Force "clearly needed" to develop ceramic vacuum tubes to replace the glass vacuum tubes. There was some discussion about using germanium transistors, but these transistors had even worse performance at high temperatures. We therefore contracted with the Stanford Research Institute to develop the ceramics technology. The contract was just getting under way as I was leaving the Air Force.

Meanwhile a man named Jack Kilby had disclosed a semiconductor device at Texas Instruments that TI considered too risky for its own investment. Kilby therefore came to the Transistor Branch of the Electronic Components Laboratory, located on the floor above us, to get funding to develop his idea. He saw a program manager named Dick Alberts. I knew Alberts as a loud mouth promoter who knew very little about technology. But Dick got the money to fund Kilby. A Department of Defense Advisory Committee reviewed the proposed Texas Instrument contract and ruled that Kilby's device would not work and was a waste of money to even explore. The Advisory Committee tried, unsuccessfully, to stop the contract. A year later Kilby demonstrated planar silicon technology for integrated circuits. This technology was quickly recognized as the basis for avionic computers. Since there would be no thermionic cathodes in the computer, there would be little heat generation. This development of Kilby's device made the investment in high temperature ceramic tubes a total waste of money.



I hadn't paid attention to transistors in 1953 when I was at RCA, and I had discounted them again in 1957. Both times I was wrongly committed to the existing technology, which was vacuum tubes. Transistors and integrated circuits replaced vacuum tubes shortly thereafter. I had two opportunities to see the coming of transistors, and I missed them both times.

### **12.7.3 MY FIRST MANAGEMENT ASSIGNMENT**

I was promoted to Section Chief after Jay Hirshfield left for MIT in January 1957. Lt Harold McLean was assigned as a military replacement for Jay. McLean was, on paper, the ideal replacement. He had just completed a Masters Degree in Electrical Engineering at Ohio State, specializing in microwave tubes. I soon found that he was so dumb that he couldn't follow the simplest instruction, and certainly didn't understand microwave tubes.

I noted these shortcomings when I drafted his first performance review, giving him marks far below average on most items. I had to submit this review to the Colonel because, while I was McLean's organizational boss, he was senior in date-of-rank to me. Therefore I couldn't be the official reviewer. The Colonel looked at my draft and told me that I clearly didn't understand the performance review system. No one ever got such low marks. Everyone got marks that are above average, and usually halfway toward outstanding. So McLean was rated as "well above average". He later thanked me for the good rating I had given him.

That was my first contact with performance appraisal systems. They are all the same, even to this day.

### **12.7.4 THE INCOMPETENT "GOVERNMENT EXPERTS"**

I was asked to join an Army/Navy/ Air Force team of "scientists" to review a Tri Service research program at Columbia University that the Army wanted to terminate. Our host was Professor Isadore Rabi, who I learned later, but didn't know then, was a world-renowned scientist.

The project under review for termination was carried out in a dusty laboratory full of noisy mechanical pumps, using what looked like a large collection of old WW II military radio equipment. The researcher was Charles Townes. I couldn't understand what he was telling us. Neither, I saw, could anyone else in our review group of "government experts". That didn't stop us from voting unanimously to terminate the project. We generously allowed Rabi the flexibility to phase it down slowly and redirect the money to other projects that we approved of.

Charles Townes later shared a Nobel prize for the work we voted unanimously to terminate. It was the original Ammonia Maser, the forerunner to the laser. Years later I met Rabi again and joked about that committee and its decision. Rabi told me that he never terminated the project and never shifted the money. I had voted against a Nobel winning project. I just didn't know any better at the time.

A couple of years later the Army tried to terminate Rabi's entire program. Rabi merely picked up his phone and called his old friend, a former President of Columbia University, who was then



President of the United States. After a call from Eisenhower's military assistant to the Army, the Army never threatened Rabi's program again.

Shortly after voting against Townes, I struck out again when a group of scientists from the Technical Research Group, a small research company in Boston, came to see us for funding. They had a concept for producing coherent light. We invited the German scientists, Medicus and Henshke, to the presentation. None of us understood what they were saying. We ushered them out with thanks, and no funding. Three years later their idea for an optical laser was demonstrated at Hughes.

Why were we all so stupid about these new technologies? These were the early days of quantum electronics applications when the advancements were made by physicists. Few people in electronic engineering had been exposed to quantum theory. There was only one useful book in English. Even our German scientists had never been trained in this subject before the war. While engineers at the leading universities like Columbia, Harvard, and MIT knew about quantum mechanics, few other engineers did. This experience reinforced my sense of inadequacy. I needed to know more physics and mathematics.

Even people who were experts sometimes didn't see the future. In about 1958, William Shockley, a Nobel Prize winner for the invention of the transistor, gave a seminar at Harvard in which he discussed his idea that a semiconductor diode could be made into a laser. I was in my first year there, and didn't understand much of what Shockley said. But afterwards I overheard a conversation between my professor Bill Paul and Nicolas Bloembergen, who later won a Nobel Prize for the invention of the Microwave Maser. Both of them doubted that Shockley was correct. But Shockley's idea was correct. About a year later three groups at IBM, MIT Lincoln Labs, and General Electric demonstrated the laser diodes that Shockley had predicted.

#### **12.7.5 WE MOVE TO PAGE MANOR**

Ed was accepted to pilot training in January 1957. With my wedding planned for June, Hans and I moved to Page Manor. Page Manor was a government financed garden apartment development adjacent to the base. Preference was given to families of officers and airman. Hans planned to move out long before the wedding.

#### **12.7.6 CHICAGO ADVENTURES**

During the time Marge and I were engaged, I made many trips to Chicago. On several of those trips I met some interesting friends of the family.

Kelly Don was introduced to me as a friend of the family. He sold dishes, I was told. I guessed that Kelly probably was short for Yonkele. He was a nice enough guy. I could picture him as a salesman. Kelly invited us to a Sunday brunch at the Drake Hotel, one of the most fashionable hotels on Chicago's North Michigan Avenue. He was there with his family. We sat at a big round table for eight in this elegant dining room. I was really impressed. This was pretty posh for a dish salesman. After the main course, Kelly left the table to talk to the maitre d'. I saw the two of them talking, but didn't think much about it. Then Dad, who was sitting to my right, leaned over



and said " Larry. Watch, Kelly. He is going to give the maitre d' his card. Then this will be a business lunch." Sure enough, that is what happened. I happened to remember this incident some twenty years later when Marge and I were walking back to our hotel along a crumbling macadam road on the Island of St Martin. Just as we were reaching the top of a crest where we could see the ocean on both sides of us, my eye caught the words Chicago, Illinois printed on a rotting cardboard box that was off in the weeds on the side of the road. As I focused on the box, I saw the rest of the label. Don Hotel Supplies. Then I remembered how good old Kelly had taken us all to a fancy brunch at the Drake, and then charged it as a tax write-off.

Martha and Al Bloom were lifelong friends of Marge's parents. Al delighted in telling me (several times), that they rented summer cottages at Michigan City when Marge was four, and that Marge used to cry when she wouldn't drink her milk. He owned an accounting firm. Judging from his dress and jeweled rings, etc. he wanted to project an image of being in the money. I think his comparative financial success had periodically tempted Dad to reconsider his less financially rewarding hospital career. Dad told me that he wasn't that impressed with Al's kind of success. A couple of times he told me that Al never got his CP A, whereas Dad did.

Martha Bloom also was conscious of money. She told me she hoped I didn't plan to be a professor. Her brother was a professor at the U of Louisville. He was so "poor" that Martha had to send him all of her kids' castoff clothing. She also told Marge that she sent one of her sons off to college with shoes that needed to be resoled. She figured that he would flunk out and be back home before the holes appeared. She didn't see any need to waste money on his shoes. She was right. He flunked out and was home before the holes appeared.

The Blooms invited us to a seder that Al's father ran. He was a barber in one of the downtown office buildings, and quite a character in his own right. He buzzed through the Haggadah in Hebrew faster than anyone could follow. Then the Bloom's two huge sons vied for who could eat the most horseradish without gagging. They ate a lot of very strong horseradish.

Aunt Anna Kaufman invited us to her home once before we were engaged. Her husband Norman was a self styled comedian. I thought he was a jerk. After we were engaged, Marge and her aunt talked about our getting together with her and Norman when I was in town. Marge told her that I usually came on Saturday and Sunday. Anna then suggested that perhaps we could drop over to her house "some Wednesday night". When Marge told me this story, I thought it was hilarious. Marge didn't. It suited me fine. I didn't shlep to Chicago to spend time with Aunt Anna and Norman.

A friend of Marge's invited us to her wedding on the weekend of one of my trips. I arrived in Chicago with everything I needed to attend this wedding, except for one thing. I forgot to bring my suit. I didn't want to buy another suit, but I had no choice. Fortunately I had a credit card at



**At the wedding in my cheap suit.**



Sears. So I went there and bought the cheapest suit I could find. But the pants of the cheapest suit weren't a perfect fit. So I had to find a tailor to make some adjustment. When I went to pick up the altered pants, I had to try them on. Then, just as I was putting on my own pants to go, the tailor, a skinny little old man with an accent, came near, grinned, and reached for my crotch. The man was a pervert. I knocked his hand aside, slipped into my shoes, buckled my pants, grabbed my suit, and got out of there. The suit lasted that day, but not much longer. Marge didn't let me live down forgetting the suit for a long time. I spared her the tale of the tailor.

Sally, a friend of Marge's family, offered to get us the furniture we needed at wholesale prices from her business in the Furniture Mart. All we had to do was get her the items' brand and style number. We were pleased to be in such good hands because we didn't have much money. We also could shop in Chicago and have the stuff delivered in Dayton. We ordered the sofa, bedroom set, and easy chair (the one that Robert Kelso inherited) from Sally. When we got the bill from "Sally, the friend of the family.", her charges were almost the retail prices. Sally had taken her profit and didn't give us the discount she promised. Marge was furious. She called Sally and finally worked the billings down to close to what we expected. Needless to say, we didn't maintain any contact with Sally (ex friend of the family) after that.

## **12.8 MARRIED LIFE**

### **12.8.1 The Wedding-June 9, 1957**

Marge had sent wedding invitations to the family in New York. No one responded. The only ones we knew were coming were Mama and Bernie. As the wedding approached, Si arranged a "business trip" to Chicago. Then Bertha acknowledged that she would come. The wedding was early on a Sunday afternoon, June 9.

Mama and Bernie took the train to Dayton so Mama could rest up for a day before driving to Chicago. That way I could be sure that at least their arrival was smooth. We arrived in Chicago on Friday afternoon. Marge had reserved some rooms in a hotel around the corner from her apartment building on North Sheridan Road. She had planned a small immediate family dinner in the apartment on Friday night.

When we arrived at the Helman apartment, Mama whispered to me that she had never ever been invited to step into an apartment as nice as this one.



**June 1957 - Bernie and Mama in front of our unit at Page Manor**



Si had arrived a few days before us with his ham radio equipment. He got a big thrill demonstrating his radio transmissions to Bob from the apartment on the 22nd floor. Everyone humored him. I thought he was silly.

Marge's Uncle Nate and Aunt Rose hosted a larger family dinner on Saturday night at a hotel with a kosher kitchen. Bertha arrived in time for this dinner. Del Jones and Hans Peot were also there. I never knew that this dinner was, according to some tradition (where is it written?), the groom's family's responsibility. I was just swept along by all of Marge's arrangements. The last weddings I had attended were Bertha's and Martha's, and those were just cookie and punch affairs. So I just followed instructions and concentrated on insuring that Mama and Bernie and I met the dress codes and timetables for the assorted affairs.

Martha called late on Saturday night after the dinner. She finally decided to come. She was flying to Chicago and would arrive about 11 :30pm. I told her I would pick her up. On my way to Midway Airport, at about 10:45pm, a Chicago policeman stopped me for speeding. I may have been speeding, but not by much. He inspected my Ohio plates, asked about my Wright Patterson sticker, and threatened to take me back to the station for booking. When he didn't seem to be in a hurry to write out a simple ticket, I realized that he was just trying to shake me down. I kept telling him that I was getting married the next day and had to pick up my sister, virtually asking for a ticket so I could be on my way. He kept talking about taking me "way back" to the station. I finally outwaited him. He let me go with a warning to drive carefully and set out to find another source of his extra income.

Our wedding was the first of two weddings held in Rodfei Zedek on that Sunday. The Rabbi's wife (Mrs. Simon, Matthew Simon's mother) was the scheduler of events in the chapel. She was a snippy and bossy person, determined that we should be on time. Timing was also important for the dinner after the wedding. Dad had hired the chef from Mount Sinai Hospital to prepare the food. As we lined up in the atrium, the roast beef was already in the oven. Dad's chef had scheduled the roast to be served precisely according to Mrs. Simon's schedule.

Joe's call came just as we were organizing the wedding procession into the sanctuary. He and Betty had decided to come and were on their way. We hadn't heard from them since the invitations went out, but here they were "on their way". Mama was adamant that we couldn't start the wedding without Joe. Marge's father was upset because tables had to be reset again and the roast beef would get overdone if there were any delay. Mrs. Simon wanted to start. The other wedding party behind us was already forming.

We were all stalemated in the atrium, some of us fuming, while all the guests were seated in the chapel waiting for our entrance. What to do? Fortunately Joe and Betti showed up before tempers got out of hand and we started the wedding procession. I don't remember how the roast turned out.







### 12.8.2 AFTER THE WEDDING

We drove the Chevy back to Dayton to set up housekeeping after the wedding. We used as much of the furniture that Hans and Ed had left behind as we could. We kept Ed's old unfinished kitchen set and the television set that we had bought used and broken, but fixed. We threw out a ratty old carpet and the junky living room furniture.

We also had furniture from the Helman apartments in Chicago. When Marge had moved her father from their apartment on the south side of Chicago to the high-rise apartment on North Sheridan Road, about six months before our wedding, she had sold off most of the furniture from the old apartment, saving the grand piano and a silver lamp for shipment to Page Manor. Soon afterward her father became engaged to marry Trudy Kane. Since Trudy had a lot of her own furniture, they sent the new dining room set to Page Manor. Our neighbors, the wives of poor airmen, sometimes peeked in the windows to admire our nice furniture.

We left on our honeymoon after only a couple of days in Page Manor. My official reason for the trip to California was to attend a Microwave Tube Research Conference at the University of California at Berkeley. The Air Force paid my travel expenses equivalent to the cost had I flown. I thought that these travel expenses would substantially pay for our honeymoon trip if we camped out and stayed at Air Force bases along the way.

Our first stop going west was at St. Joseph, Mo. The second was somewhere along Route 40 in Kansas, where I had planned to camp in a state park. Just as we were setting up our small pup tent, some black clouds appeared and the wind picked up. Marge insisted that we break camp and head for a motel. I was disappointed. I was hoping that she would enjoy camping out. Not that time.

We drove west to Denver, and then over the Rockies, heading south toward Albuquerque. As we climbed up the eastern slope of the continental divide the car kept stalling out at a specific altitude. I found that the car would start again if I backed down the hill, but then stall again at the same altitude. After a few tries I made a U turn and headed down the mountain to look for a mechanic who could diagnose the problem. The first service station mechanic recognized the problem from the license plates. The mechanic told me that a lot of "flatland cars" didn't have enough fuel pressure to get over the mountain. A check of the fuel pressure showed that his guess was correct. With a new fuel pump, we climbed over the mountain with ease. From Albuquerque we drove west to the Grand Canyon, Boulder Dam, and then to Las Vegas.

We never planned to gamble in Las Vegas. At first we only looked through the windows of the gambling joints and laughed at the people pulling the one armed bandits. Then we decided to go in "just for a few minutes". Since we needed to conserve our money, we decided on affordable stakes. I quickly lost my stake. Marge kept hitting the jackpots. Every time the bell rang, the attendants brought her paper cups with silver dollars. After she had won about thirty silver dollars, the manager came over and asked to see her driver's license. Then they threw us out because she was under 21. (I planned to save the silver dollars for the memory of that moment. A few weeks later, when we were back in Chicago, Marge used them to pay her father's cleaning lady. )



Then we drove down to Los Angeles to visit with Marge's aunts Netty and Sadie and Anna Loebner. From LA we drove north to San Francisco and the Microwave Tube Conference. While there we visited with Sy Lapporte in his bachelor apartment in Berkeley. Sy showed us around San Francisco.

After leaving Berkeley we camped at Yosemite on one of the high ground campsites. In the morning some fellows at the next site asked whether we knew that bears had been rummaging through our site in the night. No, we didn't know. And it was a good thing we didn't know.

We stopped at Lake Tahoe long enough to take the chair lift up the ski slope to where there was snow in June. Then we headed to Reno where we stopped at a motel just at sundown. As we entered the motel I hurried to beat another fellow to possibly the last room. As the other fellow was leaving his car, he stopped, turned back to his car, and asked the woman in the car if she would like to see the room. She replied, "She had seen all of the rooms". Marge and I looked at each other and smiled. I got the last room. The other guy had to hunt elsewhere.

Our northerly route took us through Salt Lake City and the Dakotas, past Mount Rushmore, to Chicago. Marge's father and Trudy Kane were going to be married the next weekend.

Chicago was flooded from several days of rain when we arrived. Streets that went under the low railroad tracks were filled with rainwater and were impassible. Stalled cars were abandoned in the high water where they blocked the underpasses. I was determined to find a route to the east side and kept looking for a street where I could drive on the sidewalk or at least get two wheels on a sidewalk and then, if I didn't lose momentum, I thought I could get across. This worked, but there were moments when I had some doubts.

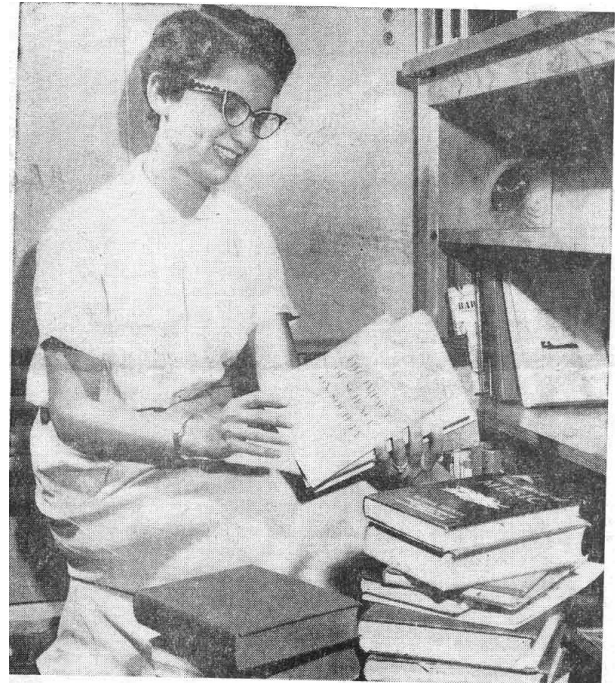
We arrived in plenty of time to attend the small wedding that was attended only by Bob, Marge, me, and Pat (Trudy's daughter), the Gelmans (the matchmakers), the Kaufmans and Marge's grandfather. Then we drove back to Dayton.

Later that summer we drove to Boston to attend Jay Hirshfield's wedding. We returned through New York to bring Howard and Zvi with us. Howard was a pear shaped little 12-year-old kid. Zvi looked like he hadn't had a haircut in years. I took them to the base barber where they got a short buzz hair cuts. Marge thought I was cruel. We took the boys to the gun range where they shot the .22 caliber rifle. Howard also discovered fossil remains that he couldn't resist collecting. It seemed that he wanted to take all of the rocks he could find back home. They were excited to be around an Air Force Base. After about a week with us, they flew home. Howard paid a weight penalty for his rocks.



Later that summer we also had a visit from Uncle Nate and Aunt Rose. They were pleasant to us, but brought the story back to Chicago that we were living in a slum and that Marge looked like she was losing weight, not good at all. We were amused by their impressions.

Marge hoped to find a good teaching job in Dayton. But the entry-level job she found was on the south side of the city, in an area populated by blue-collar families, many of whom were immigrants to Dayton from Kentucky. These parents were not strong education advocates. One of the senior teachers advised her that if she wanted to teach in a better environment she should try for a transfer to the neighborhoods along North Salem Avenue. North Salem Avenue was a major artery on the north side of the city where the Jewish community was centered. This was our first contact with the general rule: the best schools are in the Jewish neighborhoods. The local newspaper took a picture of Marge, as one of the new teachers.



MRS. LAWRENCE KRAVITZ UNPACKS BOOKS IN NEW HOME  
She'll Teach First Grade Students at Eastmont School.

We needed two cars. Marge's job was in the opposite direction to mine. I bought a 1946 Ford that was advertised in the base newspaper for \$50. (This was in 1957, so the car was eleven years old.) It just barely had enough power to keep up with traffic up the hill to the base. I was sure that I could keep any car running. So I drove the drafty Ford through the winter while Marge took the Chevy to her job. After only about four months I was pleased to sell it for about \$50, the same as I paid.

### 12.8.3 TRANSITION TO GRADUATE SCHOOL-SEPT. 1957 TO JAN. 1958

The Air Force announced major reductions in military personnel when I still had another year of service obligation (Sept. 1957). Anyone who was serving an obligatory tour of duty, like me, could volunteer for immediate discharge. This inspired me to apply for graduate school starting in January of 1958. I hadn't yet applied to any graduate school. But I told the Air Force that I wanted to be discharged in January, before I had been admitted anywhere. It was a gamble.

One of the unforeseen benefits of having graduated from Kansas University in 3 ½ years, and getting my commission in February of 1954, was that I began my military service before the end of the Korean War. This made me eligible for the educational benefits of the GI Bill. Under the GI Bill, the government would pay my tuition at any graduate school I chose, and would give me a living allowance in addition. The living allowance was actually not enough to live well on, but it was incremented for dependents, and was a reliable base that I could supplement with other income.



I applied to MIT largely because Jay Hirshfield had gone to MIT. I felt well calibrated against Jay. If he could survive, then so could I. He had joined the MIT group studying plasma physics, a topic he had learned a bit about from Medicus. The MIT group was world renowned, with well-known professors and excellent facilities. Their "future" was in plasma generation of electric power. I knew that such a development had been going at the Forrestal Laboratory in Princeton and thought this would be a good field for me.

Just as a lark, without any thought of a reasonable objective, I also applied to Harvard. My plan was to move to Cambridge, Mass. Either school was a theoretical possibility.

I also started the process of looking for a part time job at some of the defense firms along Route 128. I wrote a number of letters touting my technical background, my experience with government contracts, and my need for part time work. I never got any answer from any of them. I should have realized that the same defense cutbacks that forced my early discharge were impacting these defense firms. I was actually oblivious of the economy "on the outside."

In November of 1957, I went out of town on a trip. Marge was waiting to pick me up with the car when I returned. As I kissed her she told me that she was pregnant. I wasn't ready for this news any more than eighteen years later I would be ready when Alan told me he was tired of high school and wanted to go to college. Both times I wasn't mentally prepared to be entering a new stage in my life. Marge's announcement put a new spin on my graduate school plans, particularly the financial side of those plans. Marge probably wouldn't be working.

I was quickly admitted to MIT as a graduate student, but my application for an assistantship went unanswered.

I hitched a ride on an Air Force plane to Hanscom Field in Mass. to talk speak directly to my faculty advisor at MIT about an assistantship. He told me that he had no funds for a new laboratory assistantship in January of 1958 but expected to have some money in June. I was not encouraged. I had to find a job of some sort. I also looked around MIT for an apartment, but found only shabby apartments and high rents.

After seeing the housing situation near MIT in Cambridge, Allston, and Boston, I decided to look a little further out. I saw an ad from a real estate agent in Arlington and took the bus out to his office. When the agent asked me about my current employment, I told him that I was in the Air Force but was coming to the area to go to MIT. He then called Mrs. Ramsay, the landlady. He told her about me and tried to dissuade her from considering me because I was a "student". Against his advice, Mrs. Ramsay let me see the apartment. Later, I learned that Mrs. Ramsay's oldest son had been in the Air Force...a point in my favor.

The apartment was on the first floor of a two family house. It was located on the corner of Newport and Gray Streets, high up on a steep hill above Massachusetts Avenue, the business street. The apartment had a coal-fired furnace in the basement and a manually operated gas hot water heater in a closet. I thought the place was beautiful. It had three bedrooms, which were enough so that I could have a study and a room for the baby. The large living room connected to a dining room with a butler's pantry. The rooms were trimmed with fruitwood panels. The coal



stove was about one fifth the size that Mama had taught me to tend in Burnett Place. I knew how to haul ashes and shovel coal. I told her I wanted the apartment, but my wife had to agree.

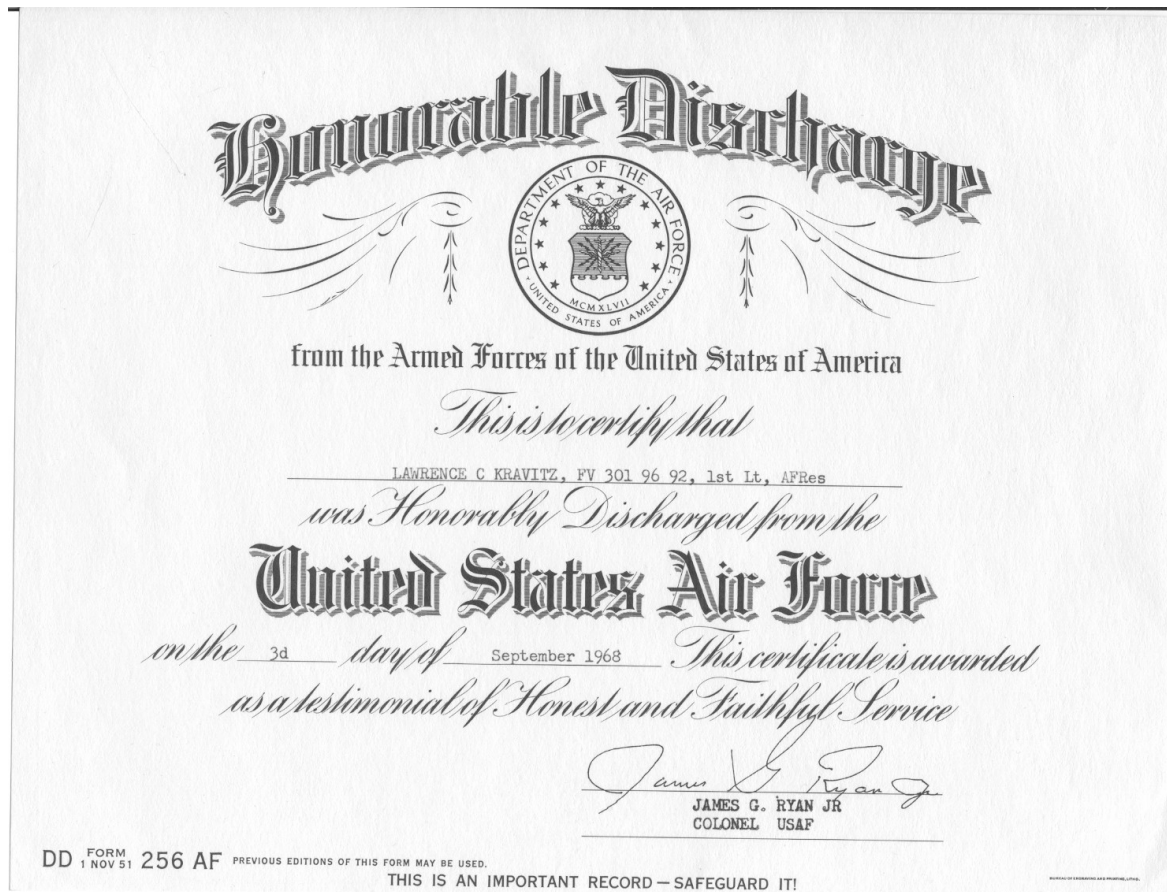
A couple of weeks later Marge and I drove to Cambridge. I showed her the choices of apartments. She didn't like any of the ones in town. She wouldn't even look at the apartment in Allston, near Boston University, after she saw a fat man leaning out of an upstairs window in his undershirt. She liked the apartment in Arlington. That is where we lived for six years. The rent was initially \$90 per month.

#### 12.8.4 DISCHARGED FROM ACTIVE DUTY-JANUARY 1958

I was discharged from active duty in the Air Force on January 28, 1958. The “old” sergeant who processed my exit papers asked me whether I was sure that I wanted to leave. After all, he said, I had four years of service. I only needed sixteen more before I could retire. He reminded me that there were “bread lines on the outside.” He was more sensitive to the recession and the cuts in defense spending than I was.

The Air Force paid our moving expenses, gave me \$200 as a relocation allowance, and about \$500 for accrued leave.

I was still in the Air Force Reserve, but opted to be inactive. I was finally discharged ten years later, in 1968.





### 12.8.5 WE MOVE TO ARLINGTON, MASS- JANUARY 1958

Marge quickly sized up her job prospects in the Boston area. The local school districts didn't hire the wives of students because they left so soon. There was some work for secretaries in the universities, but many offices didn't like wives of students because they soon became pregnant and had to leave. We decided to keep Marge's condition a secret until she appeared visibly pregnant. Since I was planning to go to MIT she applied for a secretarial job and was hired by the MIT Mechanical Engineering Department.

I met with my advisor at MIT to arrange for the courses I would take in my first semester that started in two days.

That same day Jay Hirshfield brought me some mail. I had given his address as my temporary forwarding address. One of the letters was from Harvard.

The Harvard letter admitted me to the graduate school and offered a teaching assistantship that would provide the added income I was looking for. I had applied to Harvard as a lark, and had forgotten what they specialized in. Did they have plasma physics too?

I went to Harvard to respond to the letter. Just walking the halls at Harvard sent a shiver down my body. Many of the names on the doors were familiar famous names from elementary physics or electronics textbooks. The teaching assistantship they offered me was a complete surprise.

Harvard had invited Steven Rice from Bell Labs to give a one-semester course in Information Theory. Harvard had not offered this course before, so there were no in-house candidates for teaching assistant. Someone noticed that my AFIT transcript included a course titled "Information Theory". I was therefore identified as the teaching assistant for Mr. Rice. Fortunately Mr. Rice hadn't arrived to interview me. He would have quickly discovered that the Information Theory course that I had taken didn't teach me much. I didn't disclose my secret to anyone. I accepted the Harvard offer and notified MIT that I wouldn't be going there. I didn't know or care what Harvard's specialty was. I didn't have any strong technical commitments. Whatever they had, I would do.

I was lucky again. Plasma fusion never materialized. People trained in that field went unemployed or found other areas in which to work where they needed to get retrained. Jay Hirshfield may have been one of the last students to get a degree from the Plasma Physics group at MIT. The professors retired shortly thereafter and the field died.

Harvard's field of specialization was solid-state physics and electronics. This field was the basis of the transistor technology that I had seen but failed to recognize as important. This was a growth field with lots of possibilities for graduates in universities and industry for many years. By luck, Harvard's need for a teaching assistant in Information Theory saved me from a dead end career in plasma physics. That was the lucky payoff from that course in Information Theory at AFIT.



My Air Force days were now behind me. I was now a graduate student. I was also about three years older than my peers. As time went on I found that this age gap was costly in some respects. It was, however, the price I had to pay for starting out poor and using the Air Force to get an education. I had been very lucky otherwise.

By pressing to graduate from Kansas in 3 1/2 years, I was commissioned in January of 1954. This enabled me to get into AFIT in March of 1954, which turned out to be the last time the Air Force accepted Second Lieutenants. The AFIT assignment saved me from a dead end career in Navy nuclear reactors. The Korean "conflict" was declared ended in 1955, so by getting into AFIT in February 1954, I was also entitled to the GI Bill of Rights, which financed my tuition and some expenses at Harvard. The silly AFIT elective course in Information Theory also misled Harvard into rescuing me from a dead end career in plasma physics. I had met Marge. We were starting a family. This was a string of good luck.

We knew that Marge would have to stop working in a few months. Then her income would cease. We didn't know how we would make ends meet, but we knew we would, somehow.



## **13. HARVARD YEARS 1958-1963**

### **13.1 MY FIRST YEAR :SPRING AND SUMMER -1958**

#### **13.1.1 OUR APARTMENT**

Our 5-room apartment included a living room, dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms and a sunroom. The steam heat came from a coal-fired furnace in the basement. The hot water came from a manually operated, gas-fired, water heater in the hall closet.

We outfitted the kitchen with a used refrigerator, a used washing machine, and the cheap kitchen set I had inherited from Ed Jedrziwski.

We furnished the living room, dining room and our bedroom with the same furnishings we had in Dayton. All we needed to buy were rugs for the floors.

The front sunroom became my study. I built a desk from a door, and a tall bookcase from lumber. I used the steel filing cabinet from Woodley Road. This was a perfect setup for my nighttime studying. The single bed from my bachelor days went into this room for any single guests.

We learned to anticipate our need for hot water. About a half hour before a shower, doing dishes, or running the washing machine, we had to light the gas flame under the water heater. We also had to remember to turn it off.

I stoked the furnace and hauled the ashes. These were unpleasant tasks because of the years of dust accumulation in the basement. I choked whenever I went down there. (I stoked the furnace for only one winter. In June 1959 the Ramsays upgraded the coal furnace to an oil furnace with a hot water capability.)

We also segregated our garbage. We put the "wet" garbage from the kitchen into a waste can set into the ground behind the house. About once a week the local pig farmers came to collect this slop. The whole town handled the wet garbage this way. During the summer, the can in the ground was crawling with maggots.

#### **13.1.2 BATTLING THE THE HARVARD MYSTIQUE**

My stomach became knotted from anxiety when I approached the classic red brick and white towers of Harvard along Memorial Drive. I felt like I was sneaking into the place, would be discovered as a fraud, and then thrown out. I didn't have the self-image of a Harvard man. Harvard had so much more tradition and understated wealth than Cornell that I didn't feel I belonged there. Part of this anxiety may also have been my fear of failure. This condition lasted for about four months.

Teaching fellows, like me, were assigned offices. Mine was on a bridge that connected two buildings. I shared this office with David Blackstock, a second year graduate student in acoustics. Our window looked out on the quadrangle that stretched from the physics building to the law school building.

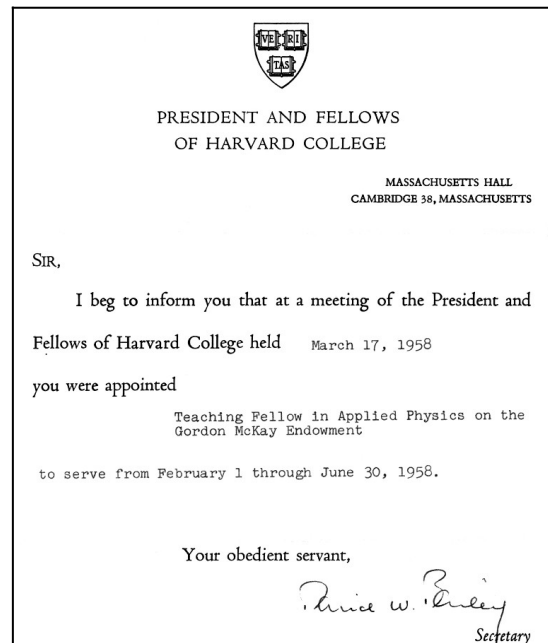


Every day at noon Professor Julian Schwinger and about five of his students walked past our window to get lunch at Harvard Square. Schwinger was one of the world's outstanding theoretical physicists. He was expected to get a Nobel Prize. I was excited just to see him. Then I saw Edward Purcell. He already had won his Nobel Prize. Steven Rice, the man I would work for, was famous for some of the earliest developments in Information Theory. I sometimes felt like pinching myself to make sure that Harvard wasn't just a dream.

### 13.1.3 MY FIRST SEMESTER

My Teaching Fellowship duty limited me to only two courses in my first semester. This duty also created my biggest workload.

My job was to grade the students' homework. But I didn't know the material well enough to work all of the problems myself. I often used the homework of the brightest students to see how the problems should be worked. Then I graded the rest. (A couple of those students became professors at Harvard). Sometimes I went to Mr. Rice for an explanation. I was surprised to see how little of the solution he remembered, but how he was able to work every problem starting from fundamentals. The class was very large. Mr. Rice gave a lot of homework. I worked very hard to do a good job.



**Marge and I joked about whether my "obedient servant" did windows.**

The Information Theory I had at AFIT dealt with coding. Mr. Rice taught Statistical Information Theory. This required knowledge of advanced complex variables that I didn't learn until the next semester. Twenty-two years later I told Saul to take a good course in complex variables. He did. Then he delighted in telling me that he never found a use for it.

I took my first course in solid-state physics in my first semester. I enjoyed the subject and liked Professor William Paul. I decided that I would specialize in solid-state physics and picked him as my advisor. I also took a course in Classical Mechanics that was supposed to be a prerequisite to Quantum Mechanics.

### 13.1.4 LIFE IN ARLINGTON

Marge waited for me to pick her up at the front of MIT every afternoon for the drive home. By early March, when she was noticeably pregnant, a heavy wet snow made the Gray Street hill up to Newport Street too slippery for the car to maintain traction. At first I let Marge drive the car, while I pushed from the rear. When she couldn't control



the wheel-speed to get traction, we reversed roles. We must have been a funny sight: a pregnant woman pushing the car while her husband sat inside. But it worked. We made it up the hill.

We soon used up the coal that we had found in the basement coal bin. I ordered a ton of pea coal, because that is what I remembered that Mama always ordered at Burnett Place. Marge reported that several men schlepped the coal in baskets on their shoulders from the curb to the basement. She thought they looked like slaves in a coal mine.

Marge saved burned out light bulbs. She believed that the power company would replace them free, as it did in Chicago. I never heard of this, and didn't believe it, but went along. My disbelief was confirmed when I presented a bag of burned out bulbs to the clerk at the power company office in Arlington Center. He just looked at me as if I was nuts. (Later, when I worked at GE, I learned that some electric power companies furnished inefficient bulbs to their customers. The power companies then profited from the excess power consumption. That was probably the case in Chicago.)

#### **13.1.5 MAMA LEARNED ABOUT HARVARD**

Mama and Bernie moved from the Manida Street apartment to the Pelham Parkway section of the Bronx in the spring of 1958. The new apartment was on a lower floor, so Mama could get in and out without walking stairs. One of her walking destinations was the Jewish Community Center on Pelham Parkway.

Mama learned about Harvard at the JCC. She told me that one evening she sat and listened to two other women brag about their grandchildren. One bragged that her grandson was being admitted to Columbia. The other bragged about her grandson at Cornell. Mama sat silently for a while, just listening. She knew about Cornell and Columbia. Then she asked meekly if either of the ladies had ever heard of a school called Harvard. This was an innocent question, because Mama had never heard of Harvard, except through me. After both women raved at how wonderful Harvard was, they asked her why she was asking. Mama explained that her son was studying there for a PhD in Physics. According to Mama, both women became speechless. Then they just stood up and walked away. Mama told me she didn't know until then what a great honor she should feel that I was at Harvard.

#### **13.1.6 MONEY**

We estimated that we would need a minimum of about \$4400 per year to live, without tuition. The GI Bill provided tuition and about \$1440 per school year for subsistence. Therefore I had to earn about \$3000 per year. A half time teaching fellowship paid about \$1500, leaving about \$1500 to be earned during the summer. Unlike MIT, Harvard did not offer laboratory assistantships to students, even for the summer, until they were ready to start on their thesis. Therefore I had to look for a summer job off campus.



### **13.1.7 SUMMER 1958 MIT LINCOLN LABORATORY**

I found a summer job at the MIT Lincoln Laboratory in Bedford, Mass. The job paid about \$1500 for the summer.

I was assigned to work in a lab devoted to applications of very high frequency microwaves. Gerry Heller, a professor of applied mathematics on leave from Brown University, was my boss. He assigned me to build a power supply for a new microwave tube that they had just bought from a French company. After I set up the tube, I used it to develop a novel ferrite isolator. Heller and I published a short note in the Proceedings of the IRE (47,2) on my ferrite isolator.

I was so involved with these ferrites that I talked about them in my sleep. One night Marge says that, while I was in a deep sleep, I told her very clearly to "go get the ferrites. They are right there in the box." We then had an extensive conversation about the ferrites. Marge says I scared her out of her wits. I don't remember a thing.

### **13.1.8 OUR BABY- JULY 9, 1958**

Marge had picked a doctor whose office was in Boston, but walking distance from her job at MIT. She walked to her appointments all through the spring of 1958. She was due to deliver our baby in early July, about a month after I started at Lincoln Labs.

In preparation for the baby, we bought a crib from a children's furniture store that was no more than a hundred yards from the Boston Garden. (I never expected that this proximity would produce a Celtics fan). I added a changing and bath table on top of an unfinished chest. I also improvised an electric heater for the baby's room by adding some nichrome wire to a casement window fan we brought from Page Manor.

On July 8<sup>th</sup>, Marge felt some pangs. Her doctor told her to just call a cab and come to the office. "Don't bother hubby," he said. Shortly thereafter Helen Reilly, Gerry Heller's secretary, poked her head in the door of the lab where I worked. After she saw me, she shouted, in her strong Irish accent: "Larry. Your wife's doctor called. He said he was taking her to the hospital. He said you should just go home and they will call you if they need you". About four people were working in this big lab space at the time. They all gave a big laugh and a loud cheer.

When I came home, I told the Ramsays what was happening. Mr. Ramsay had just come home from his job as an A&P butcher. He leaned over the upstairs porch rail to tell me "Your life is just starting." He was right.

Marge delivered our little boy the next day, on July 9. After we learned that we had a boy, I asked the hospital for the names of qualified mohels. Then I called the mohel. We didn't think of making a party to celebrate the bris. In my consultations with Martha and Meir about the preparations, they never suggested inviting people. Only Dad and Trudy attended.



**Alan-Ten days old**



The bris was performed in the Beth Israel Hospital. We named our baby Alan Bruce-Aaron Benjamin, after my father (Aaron) and my maternal grandmother (Beyle). Dad held Alan while the mohel did his work.

The mohel was the same one who later performed on Saul, and Hillel and Jonathan Spielman. He told the same jokes at every bris. The one I remember is his comment when the baby screamed, that, with a mouth like that, the baby would surely grow to be the president of the shul.

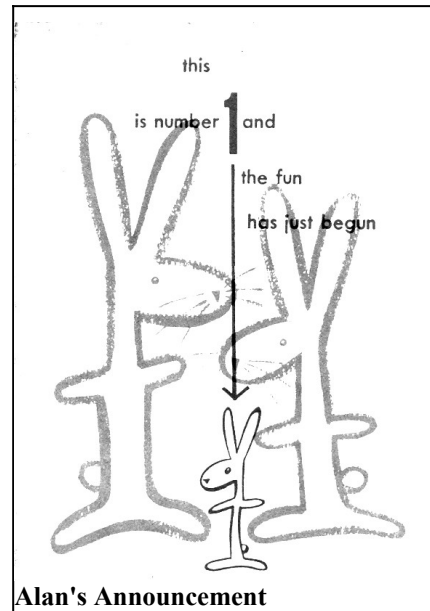
Before we brought Alan home, I went to Filene's Basement and, for about ten dollars, bought enough undershirts and cloth diapers that we never had to resupply. Everything had some defect, but Alan never noticed.

I took a lot of pictures of Alan, trying to record his infancy for posterity. We carried him around in a new product called an "Infantseat." He slept in it wherever we put him.

I learned to change Alan's diapers. One night, while I was changing him on the changing table, I stuck him with a diaper pin. I had to push the pin hard to get it through the folds of the cloth diaper. Once through, it penetrated into a fold of skin at his waist and out the other side of the fold. I had pinned his skin to the diaper. He didn't cry out. I noticed the problem when I tried to close the pin. I was horrified that I had hurt him. Or that the dirty pin would cause an infection. When I withdrew the pin there were only two little red dots as evidence of my misdeed. He healed quickly and there never was a problem. I remember the event, however, very clearly.

### 13.1.9 THE FAMILY

Meir told me to plan for a Pidyon Haben. He explained that Cohens and Levis, and even their daughters, didn't need to do this. So I asked him why I needed to bother, since I am a Levi. This was news to him. Then, he asked why Bertha had one for Howard. She didn't need to. When I related this to Bertha, she wasn't amused. She





was very sick at the time and didn't need the extra effort. (Howard's Pidyon Haben is recorded on the videotape of Si's films.)

Mama and Bernie came to see Alan later in the summer. This was Mama's first visit to our apartment. She brought us the yahrzeit lamp with the luminous star that we still have. When she saw the chair in the living room, she must have thought it was fragile. Recalling the fate of her sofa at Burnett Place twenty years before, she told us not to let Si sit in it. (This was the modern looking Naugahyde chair that we had bought through Sally.)

Then Mama asked, "Where is the machine?". She meant the sewing machine. She couldn't see how we could have a proper household without a sewing machine. Afterwards we bought a used sewing machine. Marge took an evening sewing course at Arlington High School. She began making her own clothes.

Meir made his first trip to Israel in the summer of 1958. He brought us a bib for Alan, covered with the aleph-bet, and a silver wine cup (the one with the square bottom),

That fall I went to High Holiday services at the Harvard Hillel. They were held in a large room in the Harvard Chapel. The walls of the room were lined with alcoves, and each alcove held a small bust a previous Harvard Protestant minister. Every bust had someone's talis bag pulled down over the minister's face. The sight of the wall of statues with bags over their faces was very funny. I sat with Alex Neuwirth, my friend from Hunts Point. I was surprised that he knew so much about the service since he went to Temple Beth Elohim, where I had my Bar Mitzvah. He told me he used to go with his father and grandfather.

## **13.2 MY SECOND YEAR: 1958-1959**

### **13.2.1 CLASSES**

I was required to submit a Plan of Study for three areas of emphasis leading to my thesis area. My three areas were: a) Electric Circuits, b) Applied Mathematics, and c) Quantum Mechanics. My thesis area was Solid State Physics. The Committee on Higher Degrees approved the plan and agreed that I could fulfill the Electric Circuit requirement by an oral exam.

I had initially hoped to finish the PhD in about three years. That hope was based on the assumption that I was a full time student. But, needing to earn about \$1500 during the school year, I could only take two courses each semester. At that rate I would take much longer just to complete the coursework I needed to find additional financial support.

I applied for scholarship aid for the following school year. Meanwhile I continued to work as a half time as a Teaching Fellow and took only two courses each semester during the 1958-1959 school year.



I took two courses in each of applied math and quantum mechanics. My two applied math courses were great. The professor, Harvey Greenspan, was the best mathematics teacher I had ever had.

The two quantum mechanics courses were with J.H. Van Vleck, a Nobel Prize winner. He was a terrible classroom lecturer, but his brilliant selection of topics and problems provided all of the theoretical tools I ever needed for my subsequent career.

I also passed my foreign language requirement. I was able to do a decent translation of a simple French article about electrons in a cyclotron. I had studied scientific French on my own. I was lucky. Later candidates were required to take a language course.

### **13.2.2 LIFE WITH ALAN**

Alan took his afternoon naps on the back porch in the carriage. This started in August and continued through the winter, so long as the temperature was above 20 degrees. We just bundled him up. I wired a microphone to the audio stages of a Heathkit radio that I had built. We put the microphone in the carriage and the amplifier and loudspeaker in the house. The system enabled Marge to hear Alan when he woke up.

Marge knitted sweaters, mittens, and caps for Alan. She made all of the knitted clothing in the pictures. She also learned how to make braided rugs from wool cloth scraps. We still use both of the rugs she made.

Alan made sing-song sounds when he was lying in bed. They sounded like da-di-da-di. I could imagine that I heard him whatever I was doing. When I checked, he usually was asleep.



**Going out for a nap**



**On the changing table**



### 13.2.3 MAMA STAYED WITH US: MARCH-MAY 1959

Mama's physical condition worsened during the winter of 1958-1959. She had a bone marrow disease, polycythemia, that caused an overproduction of red blood cells. She also had recurrent pains in her back. Her Union doctors treated her polycythemia by taking blood from her. They couldn't find any cause of her back problems.

Mama stayed with Martha for a while. Then she was hospitalized at Maimonides Hospital in Brooklyn. During this stay at Maimonides, when she thought she was dying, she wrote the letter on the left.

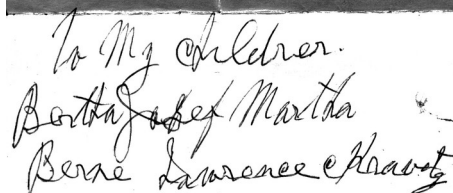
"To my children Bertha, Joseph, Martha, Bernie, Lawrence C. Kravitz:  
Dear children. That is my last day of existence. Maimonides Hospital gave me a lot of abdominal pain. I am passing away. Be good to Bernie. What ever I possess in any other name should be for my tombstone. There is \$1100 dollars at 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave and 7<sup>th</sup> street that for my burial and tombstone next to your father. Mother. I love all of you. Enjoy life. Again, your Mother."

Mama suffered her back pains before the invention of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Computer Aided Tomography (CAT). When I reached her age, I also had backaches. MRI and CAT identified the cause. Anti-inflammatory treatments helped the inflamed nerve to heal.

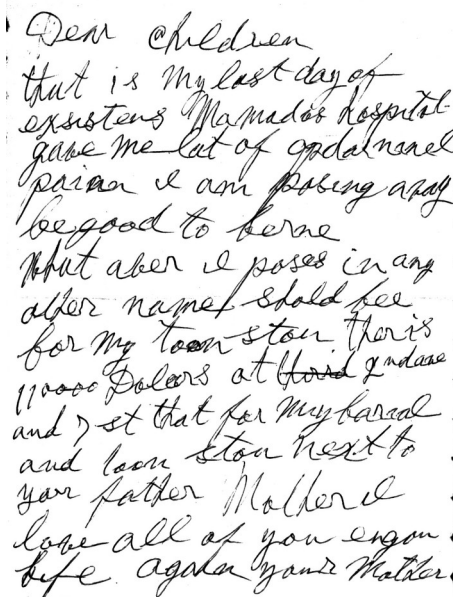
After Mama was released from Maimonides Hospital, Bertha recommended that she move into a residence run by the Hebrew Institute of Long Island (HILI), a community organization that operated a home for the elderly near the beach in Far Rockaway. She went there, leaving Bernie alone for the first time in the Bronx. But the complaints continued.

I thought she might be emotionally picked up by getting away from New York and coming to stay with us and Alan for awhile.

I drove to New York to pick up Mama in March. As we drove back along Route 128, I pointed toward Lincoln Lab and described the scientific work I did there in the summer. Mama couldn't believe that I could get paid for doing that kind of work.



To My children.  
Bertha Joseph Martha  
Bernie Lawrence C. Kravitz



Dear children  
that is my last day of  
existence Maimonides Hospital  
gave me lot of abdominal  
pain I am passing away  
be good to Bernie  
What ever I possess in any  
other name should be  
for my tomb stone there is  
11000 dollars at 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave and 7<sup>th</sup> street  
and put that for my burial  
and tomb stone next to  
your father Mother I  
love all of you enjoy  
life again your Mother



I gave up my study to provide a bedroom for Mama. The dining room table became my desk.

Mama spent all day with Marge, since there was no place for her to go. This was a big burden on Marge. After about ten weeks we decided that Mama had to go back to HILI.

The trip to New York was very hard for both Mama and me. She was in pain from sitting and had to lie down in the back seat. She told me that I was taking her back to die. There was not much I could say. I was in tears when I left her at HILI.

We saw Mama again, about a month later at Howard's Bar Mitzvah, on June 26. She had had a minor setback, and didn't look well. (The Spielmans had moved to an apartment on Beach 9<sup>th</sup> street just before Howard's Bar Mitzvah. Si developed Bell's palsy at that time.)



**Alan and Mama**

#### **13.2.4 LINCOLN LABORATORY- SUMMER OF 1959**

I returned to Lincoln Lab in June to work in the same laboratory as a year earlier. One incident that summer made a lasting impression on me.

Gerry Heller assigned me the task of collecting some experimental data to support a new theory of magnetic resonance that he and his boss, Ben Lax, had developed. Lax, in addition to being a division director at Lincoln Labs, was also a professor of physics at MIT.

Before I attempted the experiments, I wanted to understand their theory. Try as I could, I couldn't reproduce their derivation. At first I felt frustrated and embarrassed. I rechecked my results over and over again without finding any error. Then, when I rechecked their derivation, I found that they had made a mathematical mistake. The first time I tried to show Heller his mistake, he humored me as a professor humors a student. But I persisted. Then, when he saw that I was right, he was shocked. So was Ben Lax. My self-confidence in mathematical physics took a quantum leap from that exchange with Heller and Lax.

#### **13.2.5 MAMA DIED-JULY 25, 1959**

Mama soon became too sick for HILI and moved into Wavecrest Gardens, a nursing home located half a block away from Bertha. She sent me a birthday card on July 23. Two days later Bernie called me from St. Josephs Hospital. Mama was in the hospital and might not last the night. It was a hot steamy night in Arlington. I lay awake for his next call that came near midnight. Mama died on July 25, 1959 (she was 69).



Meir officiated at the burial. I remembered that he didn't come on the cemetery for Papa's burial. I also remembered Mama's explanation that he was a Cohen. So I asked him why the difference. He told me that Mama was like a mother to him. A Cohen can go on the cemetery for a mother. Meir had made a rabbinical decision. I admired his flexibility.

A year later Meir officiated at the unveiling of Mama's gravestone. Over thirty years later, another rabbi wouldn't let Zvi go on the cemetery for Meir's stone unveiling. I thought that was stupid. I wondered what Meir might have thought.



### 13.2.6 BETH EL TEMPLE

I had started going to the Beth El Temple in the neighboring town of Belmont sometime before Mama's last visit. This congregation was a Reform congregation, but with a Conservative flavor. The services were in Hebrew and heads were covered and talisim worn. Since I was obviously a student, the people were very warm and nice to me. Dr. Samuel Rosenthal was the "greeter". He always looked after me to make sure I was comfortable among the members of the congregation. Since I was younger than the other adults, he seemed to arrange for me to lift the Torah when I was there.

It was an infinitely more pleasant atmosphere than the terrible little shul on Faile Street where I said Kaddish for Papa when I was eleven. When Mama came to visit, Marge tried to impress her that they let me lift the Torah. Mama wasn't impressed. She thought they reserved this task for the Am Haaretz.



Alan at one year. He still didn't walk.

After Mama died I began to go regularly on Saturdays to say Kaddish. There was no daily minyan. Two months later, when Alan was fifteen months old and had begun to walk, I took him with me. He wandered up and down the rows, taking books out and putting them back. We kept going even after the Kaddish period was over. Marge was glad to have him out of the house so she could be by herself.



### **13.3 MY THIRD YEAR: 1959-1960**

My application for financial aid was rewarded by a General Electric Fellowship in Applied Physics for the 1959-1960 school year. This award enabled me to complete my course requirements and start my thesis that year.

#### **13.3.1 CLASSES**

I took courses with two Nobel Prize winners: magnetism with Nicholas Bloembergen, whose Nobel Prize was for the invention of the microwave Maser; and Advanced Quantum Mechanics and Group Theory with Van Vleck, whose prize was for the theory of solid state magnetism. I took the third applied mathematics course with Harvey Greenspan and semiconductor theory with Henry Ehrenreich, a visitor from General Electric.

Being a student of Nobel Prize winners, observing their thought processes, talking to them informally, and getting A's in their courses, increased my confidence with each semester. I didn't feel inadequate or get stomach anxiety any more.

I also found that most of my classmates in these advanced physics and math courses were majors in theoretical physics or mathematics. I was almost the only solid state physicist in these advanced physics and math courses. One of these students was Lowell Brown, who had been an undergraduate physics major at Cal. Tech. He made a big impression on me when I asked him how he "understood" some physical concept in Advanced Quantum Mechanics. He responded: "the job of the physicist is only to describe nature, not to "understand" it." He attributed this profound bit of philosophy to Leonard Feynmann, a Nobel Prize winner who taught him physics at Cal. Tech.

Lowell's comment led me to revise my view of theoretical physics. I became far more comfortable with quantum mechanics than I ever had been before.

#### **13.3.2 STARTING TO WORK ON MY THESIS**

I completed the coursework requirements in February 1960. This enabled me to start working in the laboratory on my thesis.

My advisor, Bill Paul, suggested the thesis problem that I started on. It was in an area that he had little direct experience in, and where his laboratory group had no equipment left over from prior theses. I had to buy and build everything from scratch. I joined his other research students in the Gordon McKay Laboratory. Gordon McKay had made his money in the shoe business. He left an endowment to Harvard for use in Engineering and Applied Science. Since Harvard didn't want an Engineering School, it applied the funds to Applied Science. It grouped the following faculties under this umbrella: Applied Mathematics, Electromagnetics, Material Science, and Applied Physics. Harvard also built the Gordon McKay Laboratory of Applied Science. Bill Paul's group occupied laboratory space on the ground floor of the Gordon McKay Laboratory building.



Bill Paul always had about five or six PhD students in his lab. My lab mate was Steve Groves. Next-door were Julius Feinleib and Dick Zallen. Two doors down were Vidyut Prakarsh and Len Feingold. We also had two machinists and a technician assigned to the group. Only Groves and I were married with children. Paul invited us to his home periodically. We had picnics. And we invited them to our apartment. The group added a social dimension to graduate school.

I had to build an apparatus that combined microwave and infra-red capabilities at very low temperatures in a well calibrated magnetic field. I knew this would be a very challenging experiment to manage, but I preferred it to the more mundane experiments I saw other people doing.

My flexible lab schedule allowed me to start biking the five miles to Harvard in nice weather. From Arlington, the ride was all down hill. Coming home uphill was harder. I usually tried to hitch a ride with one of our machinists who had a small station wagon. Otherwise, I walked the bike up the Arlington hill.

The microwave part of my apparatus came together quite quickly, because it was similar to those I had seen and worked with at Lincoln Lab. Paul sent me to Syracuse U., and IBM to see how they built their infrared systems.

## 13.4 MY FOURTH YEAR 1960-1961

### 13.4.1 MONEY

The GE Fellowship support ended at the end of the '59-'60 school year. I was fortunate to receive the Bell Laboratories Fellowship for the '60-'61 school year. It provided \$2000 to let me continue working full time on my thesis. This fellowship was quite an honor. There were fifteen given nationwide.

#### 3 at Harvard, 1 at MIT Win Bell Awards

Four graduate students—three at Harvard and one at MIT—were among 15 winners of the 1960-61 Bell Telephone Laboratories Graduate Fellowships, it was announced yesterday.

The fellowships are granted yearly to outstanding students working toward the Doctor of Philosophy degree in sciences relating to communications.

##### MINIMUM \$2,000

Each fellowship carries a minimum grant of \$2,000 to the winner and an additional \$2,000 to cover tuition, fees and other costs at the university he has selected for his doctoral work.

Winners in Cambridge are Joseph C. Burgiel, 22, of 67 Church



BURGIEL



COLLINS



MINATO



KRAVITZ

St., Ware, who will work for the; 27, of Chicago, Ill., a Ph.D. candidate in physics at MIT; Francis date in physics at Harvard; and A. Collins, 28, of Austin, Texas, a Hiroshi Minato, of Yamaguchi, Japan, studying at Harvard for candidate for the Ph.D. in physics at Harvard; Lawrence C. Kravitz, the Ph.D. in organic chemistry.

Money, and our lack of it, was always on our minds. We allowed ourselves very few extra expenses.

Before Mama died I had been sending her \$15 per month, continuing a practice I started in the Air Force. This wasn't much, but it had made her feel a bit more secure. I also tried to help Bernie with money and clothes. He became ill after Mama died and was unemployed for several years.



We used cloth diapers for Alan. Instead of a diaper service, Marge washed them in the washing machine and dried them on the line in the backyard. (Cloth diapers were standard practice before throwaway diapers were invented.)

We never spent money on babysitters. Marge belonged to a club of Harvard-MIT student wives. One of their functions was to operate a babysitting exchange. Marge usually did the exchange sitting. I used the excuse that I couldn't study in other people's homes. Not all the fathers felt the same way. Some years later I recognized the Chairman of the MIT EE Department as a man who had come to sit with Alan.

In 1962, we splurged on the rental of a cottage on Cape Cod for an off- season week in June.

Marge made almost all of her own clothes after we bought the sewing machine. The rest of our clothes came from Filene's basement.

We declined Dad's offers of financial help, except for two occasions. Dad paid our travel expenses to attend Bob's wedding in Des Moines when Alan was two months old. We flew to Chicago, and then, with a planeload of family, we flew on to Des Moines. Alan traveled in his Infant seat. People passed him up and down the aisle so everyone could take a turn admiring him.

Four years later, Dad gave Alan a "scholarship" to go to nursery school at our synagogue. He said that Alan was a bright kid who deserved the scholarship for merit...so it was a merit scholarship.

Except for these two occasions we were stubborn about making ends meet on our own, and even saving some money when we could.

#### **13.4.2 MY THESIS RESEARCH 1960-1961**

When my apparatus appeared to work, I needed samples of silicon to study. Paul's philosophy was to avoid having his students prepare materials. He therefore arranged to get silicon samples for me from a group at General Electric Research Laboratory. The key scientist in this group at GE was Gerry Ludwig, who also happened to be the GE recruiter at Harvard. His technician, Bob Trzaskos, made the samples for me. Three years later I went to work at GE. I inherited Ludwig's apparatus. Bob Trzaskos became my technician.

My disappointments started after I received the samples. I had a preconceived expectation of what the measurements would show and how I would rapidly proceed from the measurements to a thesis. The first measurements, however, didn't show anything. This was a shock.

The absence of measurements was a mystery that required me to explore many possibilities for the system's failure to produce data. The complexity of the system, and interactions between parts of the system, meant that each subsystem needed to be tested in isolation. This was a long and tedious task that took many months, but led to many improvements in the subsystems.

I already had too much time invested in this line of research to turn back and look for another



thesis topic. I had to move forward and find a way to produce a thesis in the direction I was going, even if it wasn't the original idea. Moving forward required a lot of work, time, and stress.

### **13.4.3 FAMILY**

Si and Bertha came to visit a couple of times. Si usually traveled in his Boy Scout uniform. We never understood why. They slept on the sofa in the living room. On one of these visits we heard a loud noise, like a helicopter hovering over the house, that resonated through the apartment. It woke Marge and me up. After a minute I figured out that the noise was Si snoring. Bertha never heard a thing.

On one visit, Bertha told Marge not to mention that a major ingredient of the cake was carrot, since Gail usually gagged on carrots. After Gail took several forkfuls of this carrot cake, Marge let the secret out. Sure enough, Gail started her gagging routine.

Howard came for a visit one weekend. I took him and Alan to visit a submarine in the Boston Navy Yard. The visit was arranged by my old roommate, Ed House, who was in the navy and on assignment to study naval architecture at MIT. On the way home I stopped off at the lab for something, leaving Alan and Howard in the car together.

Alan, now 3, was strapped in a harness that allowed him to stand in the front seat. When I got back to the car, Howard told me that his pants were soaked with Alan's urine. Alan had been standing in the front seat and urinating down his leg onto Howard. I thought it was pretty funny scene. I told Howard how he had done a similar deed to me fourteen years earlier when I was trying to film him in a bath.

### **3.4.4 ALAN**

Alan was always a pleasure to see when I came home after fighting with my lab equipment all day. I always felt tired and frequently discouraged when I got home. Marge was also tired from tending to Alan all day. Alan's excitement when he saw me always managed to lift my spirits when I came in the door.

I liked to take Alan to Menotomy Rocks Park. This revived me and gave Marge a bit of a breather and a chance to make supper. The park was a square plot of undeveloped woodland a few blocks away. There were no paved walks or park benches. I carried Alan on my shoulders along the footpaths that had been worn through the underbrush by the neighborhood kids. The paths led down a gradual slope to some swings and slides. I enjoyed the feeling that I was in some deep woods far away from the city and civilization, and not in a city park. On one of Bernie's visits, I took him along on this walk. After about fifty yards he said "they could make a nice park out of this place." When I asked him how, he said "by paving these paths and putting some park benches in here".

Alan had calluses on his insteps. His arches were so weak that he actually walked on the insides of his arches. We took him to a pediatric orthopedist at Children's Hospital in Boston to have him fitted with corrective arches. These seemed to help.



### 13.4.5 OUR SECOND BABY-SAUL-MAY 20, 1961

Our second baby was born on May 20, 1961. We had to wake up Alan and take him with us to Beth Israel Hospital in the middle of the night.

When I first saw our baby, I thought there had been a mix up. His baby pictures tell why. The wristband said he was mine.

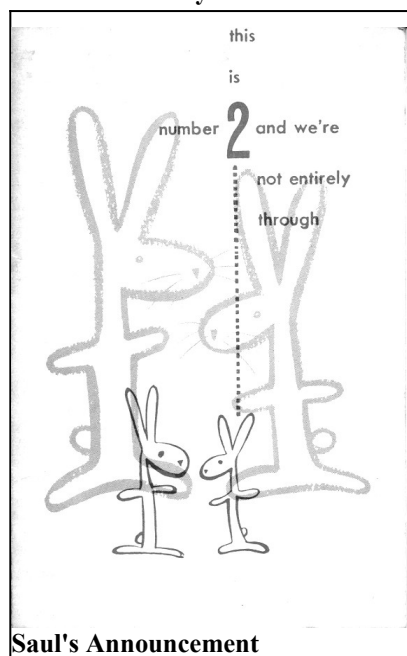
We had his bris in our living room with the same mohel as we had for Alan. We named him Saul Abram after Marge's mother, Sarah Ester. The mohel didn't like the names we chose. Saul was not his favorite king. And Abram, he said, was a pagan name. He said that we could call him what we wanted, but he would not write "Abram" in his records.

Dad and Trudy were the only ones present again. Dad held Saul during the procedure. We didn't have the energy to make a party, although by then we had seen such a party at the bris of Jay Hirshfield's son. No one from New York seemed interested in coming.

I gave up my study so that Saul and Alan didn't have to share a room. Saul was a much louder baby than Alan was. When Mrs. Ramsay saw us the morning after Saul had one of his loud nights, she would say "Just let him cry." I learned to close the door hard, then let him cry. After a few minutes he fell asleep



Saul at 3 days



Saul's Announcement

### 13.4.6 FAMILY

Si called Marge one day, by surprise, at about 5pm. He was travelling in Massachusetts with his "boss." He wanted to know whether they could stop off for a "bite". Marge thought that Si was referring to Bertha as his "boss." Not so. The boss turned out to be the owner of the company Si worked for. They actually were looking for a place to get a kosher meal. Marge prepared a dinner, and not just a bite. Afterwards the boss asked me if I would do a consulting job for him. He sold induction-heating equipment for plastic packaging. He wanted me to analyze an induction heater for some application. I had worked with an induction heater at Wright Field and was familiar with the technology. I agreed, for a price of about \$200. A few weeks later I sent him my report and a bill. He didn't respond. I had to send him several strong letters until I got paid.



This wasn't my last brush with Si's business. About ten years later Si asked me to loan the company money so they could meet their payroll. They had apparently exhausted their bank credit. Mama had loaned Si money for his first car. I thought that if I loaned him the money, I might never see it again. The unpaid loan would forever strain our relationship. Marge proposed a solution that Dad had used when his sister Dorothy asked for a similar loan. I went to the Schenectady Trust Company on upper Union Street and arranged for a loan to Si, with me as the co-signer. Si would make the payments directly to the bank. I needed to get involved only if he failed to make the payments. I assume that he paid off the loan. I never heard about it again. He never mentioned it, or thanked for my troubles.

### **13.5 THE FIFTH YEAR 1961-1962**

My status was changed to Research Fellow. I was paid the same as a half time Teaching Fellow, but allowed to work full time on my research. I didn't need to compete for outside financial aid any longer.

#### **13.5.1 ALAN AND SAUL**

When Saul was about 9 months old, and Alan was almost 4, Saul climbed over the side of the crib and dropped himself to the floor. Alan was amazed. He said that he



**Alan and Saul. I had to take the books off of the lower shelves.**

would never do that. Alan didn't even stand up when he was 9 months old. Saul was a terror.

Saul delighted in ripping my books off of the shelves and onto the floor. I had to empty all of the lower shelves.

Alan was big enough to play outside by himself, but he feared riding his tricycle down the slight hill in front of the house. He was also afraid of Donna, the girl next door who used to beat him up. He once wandered away, following the garbage truck up the street. Marge ran around the block looking for him. When she found him, she bawled out the

garbage men for not sending him home.

In bad weather, Marge put Saul in his playpen next to the dining room windows. From there he could look out onto Newport Street and amuse himself watching the traffic go by and the birds in the birdbath. One day Saul pressed his body against the playpen rails and jerked the playpen to the other end of the windows. When he reached the other end of the window he knocked several clay flowerpots off of the windowsill, onto the floor, smashing the pots and spreading dirt across the dining room. When I came home, Marge was in tears. When I went to see what Saul had done, he gave me a big smile and jumped up and down excitedly. I thought it was a funny sight. How could I get angry at a kid who already knew about the conservation of momentum? I



just grabbed him up with hugs, and cleaned up the dining room. Saul ultimately wrecked that playpen by bouncing in it until the playpen floor gave out.

Sometime in 1962 we traveled to New Haven to visit the Hirshfelds. On the way back, the Chevy started to overheat due to loss of water in the radiator. I had to stop at every gas station along the way to refill the water. We limped back to Arlington. Soon thereafter I looked for a used car to replace the Chevy. I found a year old Rambler. We had scrimped enough that I was able to pay cash for this car.

I kept this Rambler for another eleven years. It later helped Mrs. Davis' son go to college. ( Mrs Davis was our cleaning lady in Schenectady. )

### **13.5.2 MY THESIS RESEARCH**

The experiments required that the silicon samples under study be cooled to a low temperature. The apparatus that held low temperatures was called a cryostat. I had to engineer and, with my machinist, fabricate three cryostats until I had one that worked with both microwaves and infrared light.

Then I had to experiment with coolants. I tried liquid helium to get close to absolute zero; liquid hydrogen, to get close to 20 degrees absolute; then liquid nitrogen for 77 degrees absolute.

I found that liquid hydrogen was the most convenient fluid to use. But liquid hydrogen was dangerous.

My experiment became an accident waiting to happen. Harvard's liquid hydrogen supply was kept at the linear accelerator, about a block away. I used to casually wheel a large storage tank full of liquid hydrogen down the street from the accelerator to the laboratory. Then I schlepped the vessel up the steps into the building. I usually kept it at the end of the hall, with a vent tube sticking out of the window so that hydrogen that boiled off would go outside. Had the gas leaked into the building, and ignited, there was enough liquid hydrogen in the vessel to destroy the entire building. Yet there were no safety procedures in place, or training for students, to avoid such a catastrophe.

When I needed hydrogen for my experiment, I wheeled the tank into my room and transferred some. Then I vented my cryostat out the window through a rubber tube. All of this was very dangerous, I learned later.

This situation changed for the worse in midyear. Harvard, with government support, had added two floors to the laboratory. My new lab was on the top floor. I had to take my equipment apart, move it to the top floor, and reassemble it. This move set me back about three weeks. Additionally, now I had to take the hydrogen tank up the elevator and store it in my own room. Any spill on the elevator or in my room could have been deadly.

By the end of this year I started to get some data that I could interpret. The data was not what I expected to get when I started. I therefore had to concoct an entirely



different rationale for the research I was doing. Then I had to get more samples that were prepared to produce data in the new rationale.

Exploring all of these blind alleys, moving the laboratory, and tracing my missteps took the entire year.

### 13.6 THE SIXTH YEAR: 1962-1963

#### 13.6.1 FINISHING THE THESIS-MARCH 1963

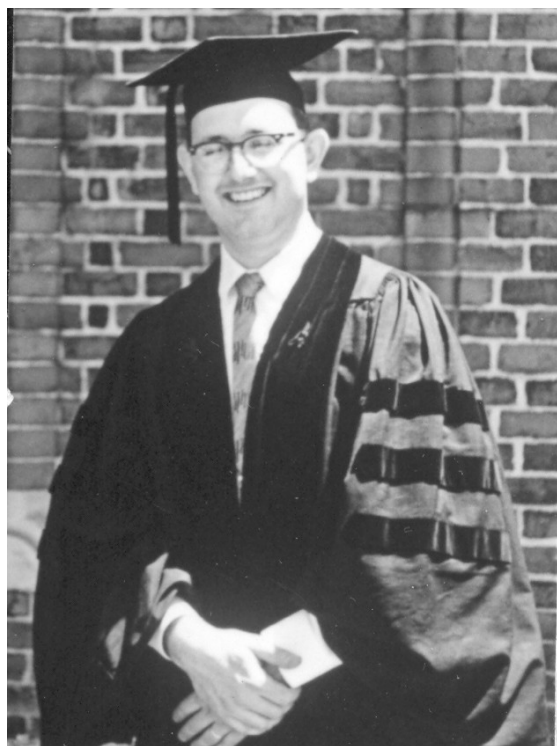
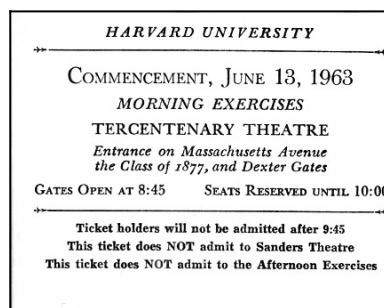
I first started getting self-consistent data in the fall of 1962. Daylight began appearing on the horizon. I wondered how much data I needed for a thesis, but was afraid of what the answer might be if I asked.

Marge was anxious for me to finish my thesis and get on to gainful employment. She kept telling me, "Tell him you've done enough." I finally got up the courage to raise this point with Bill Paul as he was giving me a ride home one evening and we were approaching the Arlington hill up Route 2. He agreed that I had done enough and that I could start writing my thesis. Marge was happy when I came home with the news.

I began writing my thesis, and, to save money, Marge was my typist. I had to write quickly to graduate in June.

Marge had to make 5 carbon copies to meet the library's thesis copy requirements. I tried to dodge the carbon copies by using copies from a new machine that the Physics Department had bought. It was called a Xerox copier. It copied one page at a time, and its quality exceeded that of carbon copies. I argued with the graduate school librarian that Xerox copies should be an acceptable substitute for the carbon copies of the thesis. She didn't agree because the "archival" quality of Xerox copies was suspect. Xerox copies, she said, might fade. Marge had to make the carbon copies, even if some of them were barely legible.

I was relieved to be finished, but somewhat disappointed with the thesis. Because of the nature of the data, the thesis didn't give me a chance to exercise any of the theoretical tools that I had developed in my courses. It showcased my skill as an experimentalist,



My last day of school.



but was light on theoretical analysis. I was happy later on find that this imbalance was not a disadvantage when I went for job interviews.

After the thesis had been submitted and approved, I had to take a final oral exam. Bill Paul took me to play squash immediately before my oral exam. He beat me. After that, my exam was easy. My oral exam committee included Paul, R. V. Jones, and N. Bloembergen.

### **13.6.2 MY GRADUATION AND INTERVIEWS- JUNE 1963**

Bernie, Bertha and Meir came for my graduation in June 1963.

I had decided to stay on at Harvard as a Post Doctoral Fellow to finish some experiments. I also had to look for a job. I interviewed and had job offers from GE, Bell Labs, RCA, Lincoln Lab., and Ford Research Lab.

I found that RCA and Ford Research did the most “scientific” work. Their offers seemed attractive, but I couldn’t figure out what those companies could get out of that research. I therefore discounted them.

I chose GE over Bell Labs and Lincoln Lab. on the advice of Professor Harvey Brooks. He was the Dean of the Division and also the Scientific Advisor to President Kennedy. He had worked at

GE before coming to Harvard. He recommended GE as the place I would learn the most the quickest. He also cautioned me not to continue work on my thesis topic at GE. He suggested I use the break to start in some new area of research.

### **13.5.4 ALAN**

Alan started kindergarten in Arlington in September 1963. The school was only about three blocks away from our house. He told us very little about school until just before Thanksgiving, when he reported singing a song about a “king of Israel”. Marge insisted that I call the school to complain. The teacher's response was that they have had Jewish children there before and there had been no complaints about Christmas songs. She said that she didn't realize that these songs were offensive. I assured her that they were. I felt good voicing my opposition, but wondered whether I had done any good.

Someone had given Alan a plastic golf set. It had a club, a ball, and a small plastic cup. I put the ball on the grass in the back yard and showed Alan how to swing the club to hit the ball. He tried to hit the ball, but always missed. Mr. Ramsay was on the porch watching us. After Alan missed a number of times, he leaned over the porch rail and



**Alan's first day of school**



told Alan to "keep his eye on the ball." Alan thought about that for a moment. Then he bent down on his hands and knees and actually put his eye on the ball.

#### **13.5.4 WE MOVED TO SCHENECTADY**

I accepted the job at GE, with a planned starting date of December 1, 1963. My starting salary was \$14,100.

We found our "dream house." We loved the house. It had a nice back yard with an open field behind it. This gave us a sense of privacy and lots of room for the boys to roam as they grew older. We knew the house was right for us when we saw the many bikes and tricycle on the cul-de-sac street. We were looking for a street with playmates for Alan and Saul and here it was.

The price of the house, \$36,000, was, however, just above the limit of what the bank would allow based on my income. As a "veteran," I was entitled to a VA insured mortgage, which meant that I needed only a low down payment. But the VA appraiser appraised the house at a lower value than the seller was asking. He judged that the

structure connecting the house to the garage was only a "breezeway," and not a room. Our real estate agent got a second appraiser to classify that space as a "room". Then we got the loan. Afterward we used that room as a playroom. It was an uninsulated space that should have been considered only a breezeway. The VA appraiser was right. We probably overpaid. But who cared? We wanted the house.



**Our dream house**

When Bob learned that we bought the house in Schenectady, he told Marge that he assumed that our house was one of those "nothing down deals". It actually wasn't. We needed a down payment. With my scholarship, GI Bill, assistantships, and the jobs at Lincoln Lab., we had scrimped and saved enough for the down payment.

President Kennedy was assassinated the week before we moved, November 22, 1963. I learned about it from our technician who heard the news on his radio while he polished samples. I went home in time to see Jack Ruby shoot Harvey Oswald, live on television.



**Saul and Alan Sept. 1963**

The morning we moved from Arlington, Alan woke us up at 6:30am with the news that a "beer truck" was outside. It was the moving truck. The moving men had the



boxes stacked on the ground ready to start the packing. Once the truck was packed, we loaded the Rambler and started driving west on the Mass. Turnpike.

As we drove, Saul started getting very sick. With his fever rising, I began to speed. I didn't see the New York State Trooper as we crossed into New York. He suddenly appeared from nowhere to give me a speeding ticket.

Saul was a very sick two-year-old boy when we arrived at the Van Curler Hotel in downtown Schenectady, where we stayed until the house closing.

Marge called a doctor who was recommended by the hotel desk clerk. He ordered a prescription sent to the hotel without examining Saul. I was very concerned. Saul didn't move on the bed for a long time. He just lay there, feverish, with his eyes closed. Then, suddenly, he opened his eyes and said "I'm hungry."

We had arrived safely in Schenectady. Everything would work out.



# *Beth El Temple Center*

2 CONCORD AVENUE, BELMONT 78, MASSACHUSETTS

EARL A. GROLLMAN, *Rabbi* IVanhoe 4-6668

January 17, 1964

Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Kravitz,  
Schnectady, New York.

Dear Marjorie and Larry,

Members come and go - this is the reality and the inevitability of being a rabbi in a relatively large congregation. However, your leaving was more than that of casual interest to me, for your participation and your interest meant a great deal to me and to the members of the congregation. It was always a beautiful sight for me to look out on a Shabbos morning and to see you, Larry, and your young son, and to be proud of the way you would lift the Torah (even though you did hit me over the head once or twice).

I hope that you will enjoy your new community and your field of endeavor.

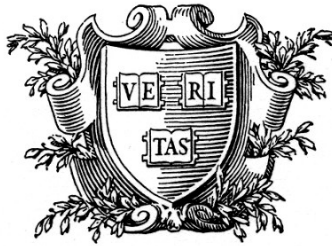
With all good wishes, I am

Cordially,

*Earl A. Grollman*  
Rabbi Earl A. Grollman

Our rabbi's good wishes.





# VNIVERSITAS HARVARDIANA

CANTABRIGIÆ IN REPUBLICA MASSACHVSETTENSIVM SITA

*Quoniam*

LAVRENTIVS CAROLVS KRAVITZ

*studio diligentiore et specimine eruditionis idoneo adhibitis Professoribus Artium et Scientiarum persuasit se penitus pernoscere*

PHYSICA ACCOMMODATA

*Praeses et Socii Collegii Harvardiani Ordine Professorum illorum commendante atque consentientibus honorandis et reverendis Inspectoribus ad gradum PHILOSOPHIÆ DOCTORIS eum admiserunt. In cuius rei testimonium nos Praeses et Decanus Academiae Superioris auctoritate rite commissa die XIII Iunii anno Domini MDCCCCLXIII Collegique Harvardiani CCCXXVII litteris hisce Vniversitatis sigillo munitis nomina subscripsimus.*



*Nathan Marsh Gusey* PRÆSES

*Iohannes Peteresen Elder* DECANVS



## Introduction to Part II

When I first began the Kravitz family history (Part I) I planned to tell only about the period before Alan, Saul, and Steven were born. They, I thought, would carry on from there and tell their own story. Having now completed my planned task I realize that they know too little about my professional life, and how it impacted their lives, to fully tell their story.

They know so little because I rarely told the family what I did specifically for a living. My situations always seemed too complex or precarious to explain to the family without them getting bored or scared. They knew a bit more about some of my volunteer work, but even much of that was beyond their interests.

I have written this Part II of my story to correct this deficiency. It is devoted to my own activities and professional life in the period between 1963 and 2002. (Marge will describe the family life separately.) I hope these notes provide the background for Alan, Saul and Steve when they write their own stories.

### 14. THE GENERAL ELECTRIC YEARS

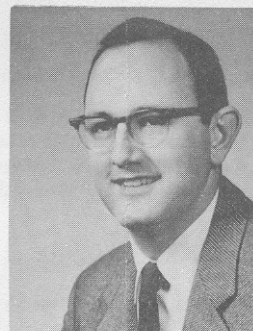
#### 14.1 THE RESEARCH YEARS 1963-1971

My first job after graduate school was at the GE Corporate Research Laboratory. This was in a very impressive five-story building, built in three wings, and located on a bluff that overlooked the Mohawk River valley. The road to the front entrance was lined on both sides by tall elms whose outstretched branches formed a leafy archway.

I was hired by the Light Production Studies Section of the General Physics Research Department. This Section of about ten scientists and their technicians worked to advance the science of producing light, primarily in support of the GE Lamp Division in Cleveland Ohio. The Section was located on the fifth floor of the laboratory building. Each scientist had an individual laboratory room about 10'x20'. My window looked out over the scenic Mohawk Valley. It was a beautiful setting.

I was thrilled to be at such a renowned scientific facility with the freedom to do independent research. No one was going to assign me to a project to work on. I had to come up with my own ideas. Good ideas, I already knew, were hard to come by.

I didn't know enough about light production to have any ideas at all, let alone good ideas. I therefore



Lawrence C. Kravitz has recently joined the Light Production Studies Section, General Physics Research Department.

A native of New York City, Larry received his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Kansas, his master's degree in electrical engineering from the USAF Institute of Technology, and his doctorate from Harvard University. The title of his thesis was "ESR and Optical Studies in Silicon."

He is a member of the American Physical Society and Tau Beta Pi, Eta Kappa Nu and Sigma Xi. He and his wife and their two children reside at 885 Cunningham Court, Schenectady. His Laboratory address is room 5B31, Extension 6464.

#### The Laboratory Announcement



decided to temporarily shelve the advice Harvey Brooks had given me at Harvard: “don’t continue to do your thesis at GE.”

I decided to work with Bill Piper on paramagnetic resonance problems until I had another idea to work on. My manager, John Eshbach, agreed with this plan. Piper was new to the physics of magnetic resonance, but had lots of experience in materials chemistry. Since I had little experience in materials chemistry, our skills were complementary.

Over the next two years Piper and I used paramagnetic resonance to study calcium fluoroapatite, a mineral that is used to produce light in fluorescent lamps. I enjoyed this work. It let me use the theoretical physics I had learned at Harvard but had not fully exercised in my thesis.

Another mineral that is closely related to calcium fluoroapatite, calcium hydroxyapatite, is the enamel in human teeth. This led us to study teeth for a short while. One day our neighbor’s daughter, little Marylou Hawkins came running up to me as I came home to give me her tooth that had fallen out that day. We didn’t find anything interesting in the teeth we looked at.

May 1965- **Steven** was born on May 16, 1965 at Ellis Hospital in Schenectady. We had to take Alan and Saul to the hospital with us the night before, when Marge went into labor. The next day was a Sunday. I told Alan and Saul that he had a new little brother as I drove Alan to Sunday School. They received the news without any reaction.

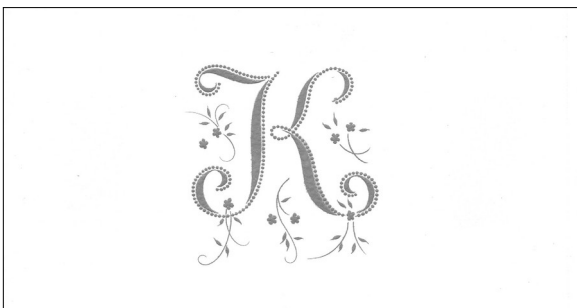
Steve’s bris was quite different from that of either Alan or Saul. Alan’s bris was in a Boston hospital with only his grandparents, the mohel and me. Saul’s was in our Arlington, MA, apartment with the same attendees plus Marge and Alan. Both were quite minimal affairs without any festivity. By comparison, Steve’s bris was a gala event in the living room of our house. Almost all of the neighbors were there. Friends from the synagogue and others from the lab all showed up. Rabbi Mussman officiated while the mohel, a cantor from Gloversville, NY, did his job. We probably had fifty people in the room, with the women all squeezed to the back. It was a real celebration. We were exhausted when they all left.

Bill Piper and I then pursued an idea I had that could have provided a breakthrough in understanding high temperature semiconductors. We began to search for the impurity in cadmium telluride that made it conducting. However, regardless of what we tried, we never found this center. We found something else that was fascinating scientifically, and we published our results in scientific journals. But I was less interested in publishing papers than in doing work with impact. And this work was irrelevant to my objective.

By the end of three years I concluded that the technique of paramagnetic resonance was simply incapable of giving much information about light producing processes in materials. I had to find something else to do.

While I was still involved in paramagnetic resonance studies, I agreed to be the GE recruiter at Harvard. The company used recent graduates as recruiters because they knew the professors and the upcoming class of students. I was shocked when I went to Harvard to interview students. I found very few who were actually doing original experiments like my class did. Most of those I met were using digital computers to calculate something that their professors had assigned to them. They had never thought of an original experiment. I sent their applications to the appropriate human resources





*Steven Jacob Kravitz*  
 date: May 16, 1965 - 8:41 a.m.  
 weight: 7 lbs. 8 oz.  
 length: 19  $\frac{3}{5}$  in.



**Steven waiting patiently for  
his bris**



**The first neighbors to arrive for Steven's bris.  
May 23, 1965**

*7128 Wolfree Lane  
Rockville, Maryland*

*Our son Steven will be called to the Torah as a  
Bar Mitzvah on Shabbat Bechukotai, June third,  
nineteen hundred and seventy-eight, at Congregation B'Nai  
Israel, Rockville, Maryland. Services begin at nine-thirty  
o'clock with the Torah Reading at ten o'clock.*

*We would be honored to have you join us in worship  
and for Kiddush following the services.*

*Marjorie and Lawrence Kravitz*

**Thirteen years later**



departments, but without strong recommendation. I also refused to fill out the box on my report that indicated “race.” I recalled that when I applied for college, questions about race, or even requests for a photograph that might reveal race, were illegal. So I refused to play the “race” game. Instead, I told the recruiters to find a new recruiter.

A paper that I heard at an American Physical Society meeting stimulated the idea for my next research effort. This paper showed that a beam of laser light that bounced out of a transparent material contained information about that material. This is known as Raman Scattering. I thought that this technique might be applied to study fluoroapatite and other luminescent materials to understand how the material affects the light that it emits.

I described my ideas about using laser scattering to study luminescence at a seminar at the laboratory. I presented the full theoretical and experimental situation, and was pleasantly surprised at the interest and support that followed. John Eshbach, my manager, advised me that if I wanted to go off in such a high-risk research direction then I should plan my work to get some results in a short time.

I had to build my own laser to get started, since lasers were not available commercially at that time. My first laser was a four-foot long helium-neon laser. Jack Kingsley set it up in his optics lab. We quickly discovered the lattice vibration spectrum of the fluoroapatite crystal.

I had great fun in applying my knowledge of group theory and quantum mechanics to interpret the data. I never asked for the help of a theoretical physicist. Professor Van Vleck, at Harvard, had always preached that a competent solid-state experimentalist should know enough theory to do his own interpretation of experimental data. I believed him. I also believed that a competent experimentalist needed to know substantial theory to conceive of novel experiments. Since I thought that I was the competent scientist Van Vleck spoke about, I never sought out the help of a theoretician to plan my experiments or explain my data. Later on, Gerry Mahan, a theorist, looked on our work and asked if he could co-author an additional paper, based on calculations he had done. When I reviewed his treatment of our data, I found he had made some errors, much like those I found in Heller's work at Lincoln Lab years before. I enjoyed being one up on him.

My real scientific interest wasn't in the crystal lattice, but in the defects and impurities that produce light. My calculations showed that I would need a more powerful laser and a dedicated optics lab to do this research. I ordered the optical equipment, but I had to build my own powerful argon ion laser.

The practical result after two years of this effort was minimal. After I finally built everything and saw the kind of data that a real experiment can yield on real materials, I decided that the information wasn't relevant to the real light producing processes after all. Disappointed, I gave my equipment away to another group to make room in my laboratory for something new.

The problem I faced was that the practical luminescent materials used in lamps and television picture tubes are always powders. My experiments required single crystals. But the chemists can't produce single crystals with the same properties as powders. Had I known this beforehand, I never would have started down that path. None of my colleagues apparently knew about this problem or, if they knew, didn't mention it.



At about this time Jack Kingsley asked me to help him evaluate an idea from the GE Television Department. They manufactured low-priced monochrome (black and white) products and high-priced three-color (red, green, blue) television products. The TV marketing department thought that there might be a market niche for a mid-priced two-color television. They had already wired up a three-color television to look like a two color TV. They wanted us to see if such a set was physically realizable, and what such a set might cost to make.

Kingsley wanted to demonstrate that a two-color phosphor that our group had developed could be used in this TV. He recruited Hugh Woodbury to help with the electronics. He asked me to build the two-color TV tube. We had one serious problem as we started this work. The GE union had called a general strike. We had no support from the shops. Nevertheless, I was able to build a two color TV tube in my lab. (I had to smuggle in some parts that I bought at a hardware store.) My design became the basis for all of the cost estimates that followed.

When the Television Department learned that we had built a real two color TV, and that it could meet their mid-priced target, they decided to test the market with a sample group of customers. They wired a number of three-color TV's to show only red and blue on their screens and used them for their market survey.

I could have told them that the two-color TV was a dumb idea. We had been watching baseball games, space launches, and the afternoon soap operas as we tuned up the system in the lab. The reds and blues always showed up nicely. But the green baseball fields always appeared black. The marketing survey allowed customers to view the two-color set alongside a three-color set and then to suggest what they would pay for the two-color set. The customers wouldn't pay anything for a two color TV!! That ended the two-color TV idea.



**1969- Alan, Saul, and Steve came to the lab open house. The glassblowers set up a photo opportunity for the children.**

My next research area was low voltage cathode ray phosphors. The two-color TV had used very high voltage electron beams to create the color. I was interested in the very low voltage beams that are used for the numeric displays in most auto dashboards and kitchen appliances. I wanted to know how they worked and how to improve them.



I had, by now, been at GE for about eight years and was almost 39 years old. I began to wonder if I wanted to do this kind of work for my whole life. I knew so much about the physics of light production by luminescence and cathodoluminescence that I could eliminate most proposed areas of exploration. I was running out of good ideas on things I wanted to work on. I happened to mention this problem to my new branch manager, Manuel Aven, during one of my annual reviews. My comment soon had an effect. On December 1, 1971 I was appointed as Administrative Assistant to Virgil Stout, the Department Manager. This was a half time assignment.

#### 14.2 MANAGEMENT AT GE 1971-1973

I really didn't do much as Stout's assistant besides attend meetings in his absence. These meetings made me aware of the discontent among the department managers over the finances of the laboratory. I became unsettled when I learned about these problems. Soon thereafter people began to leave the laboratory. Ben Segal, a theoretician, and George Watkins, an experimentalist, both left our group quietly for university positions. I thought that I knew why.

About two weeks after I became Stout's assistant, Stout's boss, Roland Schmitt, tapped me to write two study papers for him. Schmitt was on a committee in Washington that was studying "Materials in Industry." He had promised his committee that GE would produce two papers that reviewed the applications of advanced materials in medicine and in housing. He asked me to write those two papers and to have them ready by the first week in January (GE closed between Christmas and New Year). I had to spend the vacation week in libraries to produce the two nice papers. He reported that they were well received by his committee. This was my first substantial contact with Roland Schmitt.

About a month later Virgil Stout reassigned me to replace a Manager who had been fired along with three others. These four people had been developing processes for fabricating Light Emitting Diodes (LED) and LED displays that integrated the diodes on a single chip of luminescent material (GaP). They were caught in the act of starting their own company based on the technology they had developed for GE. Their secret scheme leaked out when they began the legal work to form their own company. When Schmitt learned of their scheme he fired them and then called all of the employees into the auditorium to hear the GE lawyer read the grounds on which they had been fired.

I was reassigned to fill the gap that the fired people had left. Their work had to continue. The group was developing fabrication processes for the new Gallium Phosphide plant that the GE Miniature Lamp Department was building in Cleveland. The group I inherited included three staff scientists and two trainees who were destined for the new plant when it became equipped. I had to recruit new people.

The Gallium Phosphide process technology was totally new to me. I had been trained to do analytic experimentation and theoretical analysis of data. This new job required skills closer to metallurgy or physical chemistry. I really had my hands full the first few months learning the relevant science while trying to put the program back on track.

The laboratory was in the basement of the building. It had no windows, only cinderblock walls. Exposed pipes ran across the ceiling. It was pretty dismal compared to my previous laboratory on the fifth floor overlooking the Mohawk River valley.



I thought that I could boost morale by Friday afternoon shmooze sessions. Marge made some cookies for these. I am not sure these sessions helped morale very much.

I also inherited a government contract to fabricate a display device. I didn't take long to decide that the device was theoretically impossible to build because the electrical heating raised the device's temperature too high. I tried to explain this thermal limit to the Army engineer from Fort Monmouth who came to do the onsite review, but he didn't believe me. So we continued to do the development. We never got a device to fully operate. Neither has anyone else. We did get a smaller model to work and published the results.

Human Resources sent me a third trainee soon after I arrived. He was a very strange guy. They didn't tell me that this third trainee had been convicted of manslaughter, had been paroled from prison, and had been hired by GE under an outplacement rehabilitation arrangement with some prison system. I learned of this many years later. They told me that they had placed him with me because they thought I "could handle him."

By October of 1972 I had been managing the Display Group for about eleven months and had become one of the more visible people at the laboratory. Art Bueche, the Vice President in charge of the Research Laboratory invited teams of people from the operating divisions to visit the lab. He treated each visiting group to briefings on laboratory programs, and mine was one of the most frequently briefed programs. We called these briefings "dog and pony shows." I was the virtual "talking dog" for my slide show. On one occasion Art Bueche brought his boss from corporate headquarters into my lab. After I showed them around, I turned to Art Bueche and whispered to him that perhaps we should spend some money to fix up the laboratory for future high-level visitors. He put his arm around me and said "Larry, instead, let's spare no expense to look austere." I thought that this was a wonderful slogan. A few years later Marge gave me a framed copy of this slogan that I hung on my office wall.

Schmitt called me to his office in early October 1972 to ask me if I would be interested in still another job. He explained that Art Bueche was on an Air Force committee and was asked to provide candidates for a civilian job in the Air Force. Was I interested? I was puzzled as to why he was asking me. Did I do something wrong? Was he politely asking to leave the laboratory? And why would the Air Force go outside to find someone? Why didn't they promote from within? He explained that I was at about the right level in the organization and at about the right pay level, and was not the only one they were approaching. As for the Air Force, he thought that the organization



DR. LAWRENCE C. KRAVITZ  
In Research Lab Post

## Kravitz Gets GE Program Manager Post

Dr. Lawrence C. Kravitz has been appointed manager of the light emitting diode array program at the General Electric Research and Development Center. Dr. Virgil L. Stout, manager of the solid state and electronics laboratory, has announced.

In his new position, Dr. Kravitz will direct the center's program aimed at evaluating and developing display systems using small, high density light-emitting elements. These semiconductor devices will find application in a variety of domestic and commercial display systems.

A native of New York City, Kravitz received his B.S. degree in electrical engineering from Kansas University, his M.S. degree from the U.S. Air Force Institute of Technology, and his Ph.D. degree from Harvard University.

Kravitz joined GE in 1963, and has since done research on light production, including luminescence and low voltage cathode ray phosphors. For the past few years he has concentrated his studies on devices and materials for display systems.

Dr. Kravitz is a member of the American Physical Society. He, his wife and their three children live at 885 Cunningham Court.

Schenectady Gazette 3/29/72



that was looking outside probably had a problem within. I asked him to give me overnight to think about it.

I was comfortable at GE. I was well recognized for my technical skills, but was increasingly concerned about reaching certain limits in pay and status. My advancement within the lab was capped by all of the lifers in the jobs above mine. My mobility to GE jobs outside of the lab was also limited because my salary was so much above those of any product division jobs I might be eligible for. I was also older than peers with comparable GE service because of my military service time and graduate school. This also weighed against getting a job outside of the laboratory.

My first impulse was to say I wasn't interested in considering the Air Force job. But I had also been advised by a friend to never say "no" when offered an opportunity by GE management. Let management think you are open to suggestion. Then they will feel free to make another offer if, after consideration, I decided to stand pat. So I didn't say "no" to Schmitt. I thought that I would wait a day to do that....and then blame it on Marge.

### 14.3 CONGREGATION AGUDAT ACHIM

The Agudat Achim synagogue was located on Nott Terrace in downtown Schenectady. Urban renewal had leveled about four square blocks across the street from the synagogue, without replacing the buildings. The synagogue therefore faced out onto open lots with remnants of the demolition still there. A building adjacent to the synagogue was the residence of the sexton, Mr. Rosenberg. It formerly was also the Hebrew School.

Two years before we arrived, the congregation suffered through a big battle over some of the former rabbi's policies. The unseemly fight caused many members, like our friends Judy and Ed Brown, to join the reform congregation, Congregation Gates of Heaven. The congregation still hadn't replaced the rabbi. Services were lead by Joe Cohen, an elderly accountant who had served as president for several terms.

We found that the people who attended Saturday services were a congenial group, many of whom were somehow affiliated with GE, either at the Research Laboratory, the Main Plant, or the Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory. Most of these people had been backers of the rabbi in the fight that led to the split.

In addition to the synagogue property on Nott Terrace, the congregation owned a piece of land close to our house. One of the buildings on this land had been modified for use as the Hebrew School. We enrolled Alan in the Sunday School.

I can't remember how I got onto the School Board. I was determined to see that Alan received a better Hebrew School experience than I did in the Bronx. Marge thinks I asked why the school budget wasn't growing in proportion to the school population. Just showing interest was probably enough to be elected to the Board.

The School Board was totally independent of the Congregational Board, but depended on the congregation to fund the school's deficit. The school hired its own principal and teachers, but the congregation's rabbi was assumed to have a vaguely defined role as overseer of the school and teacher of the older students. The congregation hired Rabbi Mussman about the same time that I



went onto the School Board. I soon learned how challenging the management of a Hebrew School is.

The principal and school board were completely overwhelmed by the task of creating a school budget based on projections from one year to the next. They waited until all of the supplies had been purchased and the bills were in before they had a projection of the deficit. This, of course, compounded the problem of the congregational board, which was chronically in deficit itself just to run the synagogue.

Neither could the principal ever satisfy all of the Jewish mothers. The dissatisfied mothers then took their complaints to the rabbi who always agreed with them, thus backstabbing the principal. Such parents were always calling for us to fire the principal. The rabbi's action poisoned what needed to be a close working relationship with the principal.

The rabbi also proved to be a lousy teacher of the high school kids. Those parents were quietly asking us to find some alternative.

The board was split over how to deal with the principal. One of the members was a pediatrician who had led the fight to eject the former rabbi. He was a native Schenectadian, as compared to most of us who were "GE people." His family and circle of friends were committed to reducing the demands of the school and congregation. (He spoke out, "as a pediatrician," against ritual circumcision, etc.) Whenever some educational issue came up, he spoke as an expert. Actually, he was a jerk and his kids were just as difficult. But he had a big following among the natives and the people who used him. Whenever we had to reconcile something between the rabbi and the principal, he sided with the rabbi.

I quickly saw that the school's biggest problem was the hiring of a good faculty, not the conflict between the rabbi and the principal. An abundance of qualified teachers didn't drift toward Schenectady. Most of our school's teachers were wives of GE employees. Any principal was therefore limited by the supply of locally available talent. Yet parents and groups of parents would always be calling for the principal to fire some teacher. They never thought about the impossibility of finding a superior replacement. Alan's Aleph Class teacher was the wife of the principal. If we fired the principal, as many people wanted us to do, Alan's teacher would also be gone, and she was very good.

I soon became Chairman of the School Board. I limited the influence of the pediatrician by developing a reliable group of members who could agree on some things in advance of the meetings. He stopped coming to meetings when he saw what was happening. I showed how to plan the deficit (even before computers) because the students advanced each year in a reliable way. The few additions balanced the small attrition. Thus the costs of books and teachers became fairly predictable. But I couldn't stop the battle between the principal and the rabbi.

The principal was an Israeli with a knack for offending people. I tried my best to shield him, but after two years I gave up. We let him go. The hiring of a replacement took a lot of time and effort. We finally found someone who was willing to move from Rochester. He also had problems, many of them with the same people. I let him fight them on his own. I still, however, remained the lightning rod for anything that came up at the school...like the time a urinal splashed water on the pants of Woody Weissman's son. Woody was furious that the principal didn't do something about



it...like what? That conversation took about 45 minutes at dinnertime one night. People had no inhibition about calling me at work at GE.... just to complain about something.

I knew that Rabbi Mussman was behind a lot of the bickering. I think he wanted to run the school himself, but we all knew that he was too incompetent to do even his own teaching. The Israeli teachers didn't respect him because he didn't speak Hebrew. One June the Board voted to withhold the final paycheck of the teachers until they turned in the final grades. This was our attempt to address an annual problem of incomplete records for many students. The rabbi's wife, Celia Mussman, was one of the teachers who hadn't turned in her final grades and hadn't received her paycheck. As far as I was concerned she wasn't due the deference of a "rebbitzen" when she was working for pay in the school. She probably thought that her husband could bulldoze me into releasing her check. He came to our house one Sunday when I was cleaning out the bushes below the living room window. In a loud voice he said, "Give me the check." I told him that I would authorize the check just as soon as her grades were in. He left in a huff. Marge had heard his loud talk and hid in the house, peeking out the window to see what would happen.

Rabbi Mussman left town soon thereafter. We hired Rabbi Zimelman. A lot of the bickering died down. But the fundamental problems didn't go away. I saw that, in spite of our best efforts, the students were tired after a full day in public school and primed to relax at the expense of the Hebrew teacher. Learning was very difficult under the best of circumstances. And the circumstances were not the best. Many parents gave winter skiing a higher priority than Hebrew school, so student absenteeism was high. The part time teachers also had family obligations that created substitution problems. As a result, the learning process was very difficult, even for the most committed students. I was glad when my term as Chairman ended. By then Saul and Steve were in the Hebrew Academy of the Capital District. Alan made a lateral transfer shortly thereafter.

#### **14.4 THE JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

The main activity of the Jewish Community Council was running the UJA Campaign. A Jewish Community Center building was located downtown in the neighborhood where the first generation of Schenectady Jews had concentrated and had built the synagogue on Nott Terrace. The connection between the Community Center and the Community Council was that they both shared a single executive.

I somehow was elected to the Council while the executive director was Harry Friedgut. Harry organized a group of people who were interested in Jewish History. Many of these people were our friends from GE. He then recruited some of us for the Council, even though we had no connections to the big money in town that was provided by the few native business families.

I somehow gravitated to the personnel committee. Thus, when Harry Friedgut left I led the process of screening resumes submitted by the Jewish Welfare Board for his replacement. I didn't see much executive talent in the JWB resumes. We ultimately hired Sam Soifer as the joint Center/Council Executive. By this time a new JCC was being built in Niskayuna. When it was completed, the balance of Soifer's job shifted to running from running the UJA Campaign to running the Center. This proved more than he could handle. When the Council concluded that he had to go, it fell to me to fire him. This was hard to do, but I did it. Next I led the search for his replacement, Mike Ruvel. He also proved to be no bright light....



#### 14.5 THE HEBREW ACADEMY OF THE CAPITAL DISTRICT

After my own scrape with a yeshiva education, I never considered a day school option for Alan or Saul. But Alan's weak Hebrew School experience grated on me. Thus I was fertile ground for Leo Phaff to sell us on sending Saul to HACD.

A local taxi company provided the transportation to Albany. The Blumenfelds, Garfinkles and Browns joined us in filling a cab. The primary passenger was a Schenectady public school student who attended a special program in Albany. Our kids were additional fares to the cab company's contract with the Schenectady School System.

When the second year approached, we waited for the cab company to propose a transportation rate comparable to the first year rate. The proposal came a few days before school started. The cost was prohibitive.

Morry Blumenfeld, Marvin Garfinkel and I worked near one another at the research laboratory. They came to my lab to discuss the problem. I cleared my blackboard for the discussion.

We listed all of the options and cost estimates for transportation on my blackboard. We quickly concluded that we could hire our own driver and run our own taxi for a fraction of the cost the cab company wanted to charge. We looked in the GE newspaper to see what a used vehicle and a driver would cost. A used Volkswagen van was listed for about \$2000. A man in Scotia was looking for part time work. We put two and two together and wrote a "business plan" on the blackboard. We would buy the van and hire the driver. We decided to ask each of the five families to capitalize the operation with \$500.

Ceil Garfinkel was very sour on the whole HACD idea for their kids. So Morry and I took on the task of getting our bus company running. We raised the money and bought the bus. We hired the driver. An insurance agent who was active on the Council provided us with insurance. Morry thereafter became the financial and legal manager. I took over the day-to-day operations.

An HACD parent helped us through the legal process in Albany to incorporate as HACD Sherut, Inc. Once incorporated, we needed a bus license to operate. But our van didn't pass the State Highway Department inspection because the heater extracted the heat from exhaust gasses. Any pinhole leak in the heat exchanger would send toxic fumes into the passenger cabin. The friendly inspector allowed us to operate without a bus license and advised me where to go to get an electric heater installed. After we were finally operating legally, our driver, a retired man with emphysema, became too ill to be trusted to drive. We had to replace him.

The news of regular transportation to HACD attracted other parents for the following year. We also had more students from our own families. The inadequate Volkswagon van had to be replaced with a larger vehicle. I wanted to buy a 12 passenger Dodge Maxivan, but couldn't find one locally. I finally found a salesman in suburban Detroit who agreed to drive the Maxivan to Schenectady. That Dodge became our primary vehicle. As demand increased, we bought another 12-passenger van and hired a second driver. We took out a bank loan to pay for the expansion.

When we needed a third vehicle we bought a 12 passenger yellow school bus. Marvin Garfinkel and I took the train to Buffalo to pick this up from a friend of Morry and drive it back.



With three buses running daily from Schenectady to Albany there was hardly a day when some crisis didn't erupt that I had to handle by phone from the laboratory. I reduced some of the calls by setting up charge accounts with gas stations, mechanics and towing services. When the yellow bus collided with a coffee truck, totally destroying the coffee unit and damaging the bus, I had to leave work to expedite the repair and get the bus running again. When the yellow bus sideswiped a Greyhound bus, the State Police called me at work. I had to fire the driver that night and find a replacement. I also had to be action central when a bus was late to school. Then the school would call in a panic: "where are the kids, have they been in an accident?" I had to deal with parents when the driver couldn't control their kids. Parents were also constantly pressuring me to rearrange the bus route so that their kids could be picked up last in the morning and dropped off first after school.

I could do all of this from work because I had my own laboratory, where I set my own schedule and could close the door to speak on the phone. I could not have done this in any other line of work where I was interacting with other people and attending meetings.

I managed to keep costs down by winning lucrative contracts to carry Niskayuna students to school in Albany. The contracting manager in the Niskayuna schools told me about the students they needed to send to school in Albany. I calculated what I thought would be a bid that the cab companies couldn't match. And I always won the contract. By charging Niskayuna about three times what we charged ourselves, we were able to keep our own costs low enough to attract more students to HACD.

Our efforts to run Sherut added about 32 students to the school. This was about one quarter of the students. We therefore made a major contributor to the growth of the school.

With this level of activity for HACD, I was soon asked to be on the Board. When Phil Arian left HACD for what he thought was a more prestigious job in Chicago, I was on the committee to find his replacement. The best candidate available was Sam Lasko, who was the principle at a school in Denver. We invited him to Albany and had him for lunch at our house. His wife became Steve's first grade teacher.

I was tremendously relieved when HACD moved from Temple Israel in Albany to a vacant public school building in Guilderland. Under state law, the school district had to provide transportation to any private school within 15 miles. We, and all of our passengers, were now entitled to free transportation. We sold our buses, returned the initial \$500 to the contributors, and still had money left over that we contributed to the school.

#### **14.5 THE AIR FORCE OFFICE OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

After Roland Schmitt asked me whether I would be interested in a job in Washington, I went home to tell Marge, expecting her to be negative about moving. To my surprise she was very interested. She had felt very limited in what she could do in Schenectady now that Steven was in half-day nursery school. She was also tired of our small social circle, which seemed to become more constricting with time. She encouraged me to be positive about the opportunity.

Schmitt was glad to hear about my interest. But I was still troubled by what I saw was a one way exit out of active research. My managers didn't "manage" me as much as they did routine



administration. They didn't appear interested in my work or even capable of following it. They never attempted to mentor me or suggest lines of research to consider. I worried about leaving the lab and losing my technical skills, and becoming like them. I recalled the death of Roy Apker. Roy had been a manager who was also recognized as an excellent mentor. When he fell out with upper management, he returned "to the bench" to do research. But he found this so difficult that, the morning before some review of his work was to have taken place, he committed suicide in his garage with a shotgun. Recalling Roy, I asked Schmitt to tell me how I should evaluate the risk of losing my technical skills once I left the laboratory, since there was no going back. His answer was not totally comforting. He said that I should look at him. He manages, he said, without being expert in all of the disciplines he controls. He uses other parameters and indicators to manage. Sensing my concern, he suggested that he would help me get a leave of absence from GE, and would keep the door open for me to return if the Air Force job didn't work out. With that encouragement I decided to interview for the Washington job.

AFOSR wasn't in Washington, DC, but was in the Architects Building at 1400 Wilson Blvd in Arlington, VA. My interview appointment was on October 13, 1972. I was very surprised at what I found.

The Director was William Price, who I remembered from my days at the Air Force Institute of Technology where he had chaired the Physics Department. Some of the senior officers were also people who I had remembered from AFIT. I felt very comfortable in that environment.

The job they were trying to fill was Director of the Electronics and Materials Research Directorate. The directorate had a budget of about \$6M and a staff of six program managers and two secretaries. It awarded contracts to university faculties and industrial research laboratories based on unsolicited proposals. This seemed very similar to the work I did at the Electronic Components Laboratory before I went to Harvard.

The office view of Washington was breathtaking. It looked out over the Potomac past the Lincoln Memorial and down the mall toward the Washington Monument and the Capital. The scene could have been from a picture postcard. I was very impressed.

I told Price I was interested in the job. He gave me one of those very long government applications to fill out. He also suggested that I call Bill Lehmann, my former physics teacher at AFIT, to tell him that I was applying for the job. Bill Lehmann was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force who would have to shepherd my appointment through the approval process. I later called Lehmann.

By December 15, 1972, Price was able to tell me that I was one of the top five candidates for the job. The selection process stalled after that. I didn't hear anything until May 2, 1973, when Price wrote that he was prepared to send my name forward as the selectee, but with a new wrinkle. He wanted to offer me the job in a category called PL-313 for which there was a four-year term limit. Additionally, the salary would be only \$32,000 after I told him I needed \$35,000, a 15% increase over my GE salary of \$29,000. I rejected this offer because of the term limit and the salary. Price then countered with an offer of a GS-16 position with unlimited term, but for the same salary. I must have told him that I would accept the GS-16. I couldn't tell one classification from the other... but I wanted a permanent position.



I really didn't understand the classification and salary implications of his offers. The PL-313 was a special classification for senior scientists. The salary covered the range of GS-16 to GS-18. So, theoretically, PL-313 was the superior classification. But salaries were capped at the salaries of the congressmen who had capped their own salaries at \$36,000. So civil servant salaries were also capped at \$36,000, regardless of what the salary versus grade charts said. At my starting salary of \$32,000, with the annual raises I would get, I would be at the \$36,000 salary cap in two years.

Schmitt was happy to hear that I was getting the appointment. He probably included this news in his monthly report, because I started to hear about it from people who claim that they heard about it from corporate headquarters in Fairfield, Conn. I started the process of getting a leave of absence and gave August 28, 1973, as my last day of work. I also asked the company to allow me to accelerate the vesting of the company contribution to my retirement before the ten-year vesting period, which would have been December 3, 1973. The leave of absence was given, but the two months of accelerated vesting was denied.

Marge was also happy to learn that we would be moving to Washington, but she was determined that we sell the house and move as a family unit. She remembered the haggard looks of the women who showed us houses in Schenectady years before, and their stories about how their husbands had been transferred to another GE location, leaving them behind to sell the house. She was determined that she not become one of those "left behind wives." So we put the house on the market. My leaving was no longer a secret.

May and June were the peak months of the house-selling season. We had to find a buyer quickly. We also had to buy another house so the boys could start their new schools in September.

#### **14.7 THE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL IN WASHINGTON**

I had taken the time on my interview trip to AFOSR to scout out the Jewish community in Washington. My top priority was to find a place near the day school the boys would attend. I didn't want to repeat the transportation challenge we faced in Schenectady. So I had to locate the day school before I searched for a house. The HACD office had given me the names and phone numbers of two day schools, the Hebrew Academy and the Solomon Schechter Day School.

I found the Hebrew Academy on 16<sup>th</sup> Street and went in without an appointment. I immediately saw things I didn't like. Then I met the rabbi who was the principal. I didn't like him either. He told me that the Hebrew Academy was the only day school in Washington. When I questioned that statement he said that maybe there was another "in some basement somewhere." He offered no information.

I never visited the Solomon Schechter School. I spoke to Harriet Platt by phone. She told me that the school planned to build a building at the intersection of Montrose Road and East Jefferson Street in Rockville.

I found the school's location on a map and drove to the area. Then I found a Bogley agent on Rollins Avenue who offered to show me some properties in the neighborhood. I specified a center hall colonial with four bedrooms, just as we had in Schenectady. I saw some properties along Route 28 in Flower Valley and along Tilden Lane in Luxmanor, and was floored by the prices of about \$90,000 to \$100,000. I thought I could sell our house in Schenectady for about \$42,000. At



Rockville prices, I could buy the biggest home in Schenectady.

#### **14.8 HOUSE HUNTING IN ROCKVILLE**

After the first shock of Rockville house prices I decided that the maximum loan we could carry with my salary would be about \$50,000. The maximum cash I could get from the Schenectady house was about \$22,000. Therefore the maximum price I could offer in Rockville was \$72,000. I gave up on the center hall colonial requirement and searched to find something in our price range.

We came to Washington as a family to look at houses. The boys stayed with the Levins in Virginia while Marge and I looked. We found a house on Old Stage Road in Old Farm that barely met our space requirements, but met our price. We signed the offer sheet in the parking lot of the library on Connecticut Avenue. Then our real estate agent went home to “make herself presentable” before delivering the offer. This delay allowed someone else to make the same offer before she arrived. We were out of luck. (This was just as well.)

I made the next trip alone. I drew a circle with a one-mile radius, centered on the JCC, on a map. I was determined to find a house within that circle. Since realtors weren’t helpful, I drove through every street in Old Farm and Tildenwood looking for “sale by owner” signs that realtors might not show. I found a run down looking house on the cul de sac of Wolfree Lane with a Bogley sign in front. The Bogley agent on Rollins Avenue reluctantly showed me this house, claiming that it had been listed with the Bethesda office. The house had a lot of superficial problems, but was basically sound. I was immediately attracted to the two bedrooms on the lower floor where I thought we could put Alan and Saul, while keeping Steve upstairs in our protective custody. I also liked the relatively private back yard, much like we had in Schenectady. The asking price was \$75,000. I made the offer of \$72,000, pending Marge’s approval and the sale of our Schenectady house, and finding financing. None of those conditions was easy to satisfy.

Marge came on our next trip. She wasn’t excited about the Wolfree Lane house. We also looked at a house on Martha Court. It was a Friday. The table was set with candles for a Shabbat meal. Its price of about \$60,000 would have greatly eased our financial situation. But Marge didn’t think it was “classy” enough for us. She agreed, reluctantly, that we should buy the Wolfree Lane house.

My next surprise was finding that the banks were not making home loans in Maryland. The Maryland legislature had capped mortgage interest rates below the prevailing market rates in Virginia. All of the mortgage money had fled to Virginia where no caps existed. Maryland house buyers were therefore buying homes for cash, and sellers were forced to reduce their prices. I couldn’t buy a house for cash. What would I do?

I noticed a tall building in Rockville with a GE Information Systems sign at the top and a Maryland National Bank branch office at the street level. I assumed that the GE unit would have to find mortgages for transferred employees, and they probably had a preferred customer connection with that bank. Being a GE employee on a leave of absence, I thought they might help me. I called a friend in the Human Resources operation at the laboratory and asked him to see what could be done. After short time he reported back with the name of the Human Resource person in GE Information Systems. That person gave me the name of the bank officer to see. The loan was approved without a hitch.



#### 14.9 SELLING THE HOUSE IN SCHENECTADY

We thought that our house on Cunningham Court was a great house in a great location. We thought we could certainly sell it ourselves without a realtor. Our ad drew a lot of lookers, but few buyers. One woman fell in love with the place, but her husband was reluctant to buy. After we ran out of potential buyers and were starting to be a little desperate, I called him up to propose a deal. By then I had determined that our GI mortgage at 5.25% was transferable. This proved to be the big selling point with him. We closed the sale at \$42,500. After paying off the \$20,000 remaining on our mortgage, we had \$22,500 to apply to our new mortgage. Just enough. The closing date was set for August 26, 1973.

#### 14.10 WAITING FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ACT

I didn't realize that I had assumed an enormous risk by selling the house in Schenectady, buying one in Rockville, and then laying out the expenses of moving. I assumed that when Price said that I was selected for the job that his word was final, the rest was routine paperwork. This was not true. Washington at that time was in the budgetary convulsions of the ending of the Vietnam War and the political turmoil of Watergate. There was a lot of uncertainty in the air. Paperwork like the approval of my appointment did not have a high priority in the Pentagon. So the approval dragged beyond the mid-July date that Price had promised me.

I called our congressman's office in early August to see if they could do anything to accelerate the approval. Their reply confirmed that August 21 was still the target date.

I did not have the job in Washington when we moved to Rockville on August 28, 1972. I still had my job in Schenectady, but now it was a long commute. I bought a used Ford Mustang to drive between Rockville and Schenectady. The Blumenfelds were kind enough to offer me their spare bedroom.

I worked from noon on Monday to noon on Friday, sleeping at the Blumenfelds on the weekday nights. I felt strange at work, managing the group, when everyone knew that I was leaving as soon as my job was approved. When anyone else had announced that they were leaving the company they had to have their desk cleared out the next day. I was different. Roland Schmitt called several times to see how my job was progressing. On one occasion Schmitt suggested that I tell the Air Force I had changed my mind and was staying at GE. But we had already moved by then, so I stood firm.

I spent the weekends in Rockville, fixing and painting and spending time with the family. One of the neighbors asked me whether I was in the practice of finding run down properties to fix up and sell.

The Yom Kippur War broke out on October 5, 1973. The Arab Oil Embargo followed immediately. The country was in a panic. The specter of fuel shortages caused people to fill every automobile fuel tank, and this demand surge created long lines at gas pumps everywhere but on the turnpikes. People thought that OPEC, by controlling oil, would dictate politics to the world. There was a lot of fear and despair.



We decided to tour the White House on Saturday afternoon, October 20, 1973, with Marge's dad who was visiting. As we walked behind the White House to see the gardens, we saw President Nixon come out on the back portico. He smiled and waved to the tourists just as we had seen him do on television. We didn't know until later that he was in the process of firing his Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General for failing to defend him in the Watergate scandal. The media later called this action the "Saturday Night Massacre."

The evenings at the Blumenfelds were so hectic that I sometimes didn't go there until the children were already in bed. They ate dinner with the television on the table, and with Morry shouting at everyone else for quiet so he could hear the Mideast news. Everyone else was shouting at each other about something. I was used to far quieter dinners at home. I found the tumult very upsetting.

#### 14.11 FINALLY

My appointment letter finally arrived on November 20. I used some vacation days to make my last GE day December 3, the tenth anniversary of my employment. I thus qualified for vesting of GE's contribution to my pension. I also withdrew all of my own contributions to my pension so that I would have some cash reserve.

With my letter of appointment, I was reimbursed for the money I had laid out for moving expenses.

The final appointment was different than either of those that Price had proposed to me. I was given a PL-313 appointment without any term limit. Thus I was the equivalent of a GS-18, the highest level in the Civil Service. I was also given service credit for the four years that I had spent in the Air Force.

As I would later learn, much of the government was in transition because of the instability in the White House. Reading about the changes in the Schenectady Gazette was different than seeing them close up and personal. This instability made me very nervous. I was used to GE where the rate of change was glacial.

The Arab oil embargo had caused a rapid rise in the prices of gasoline and electricity. The government urged people to conserve electrical energy by turning off lights and unscrewing light bulbs in their homes and businesses. The light bulb sales of the GE Lamp Division plummeted. GE began laying off workers and closing operations. One of the operations it closed was the LED plant that I had trained people for. All of those people were laid off. The program at the lab that I had managed was terminated, as were some of the staff. I had gotten away just in time.



DR. LAWRENCE C. KRAVITZ  
At GE Center Since '63

## Kravitz Gets AF Research Director Job

Dr. Lawrence C. Kravitz, manager of the solid-state lamp array program at the General Electric Research and Development Center, has been appointed director, Electronic and solid-state sciences at the Air Force Office of Scientific Research in Arlington, Va.

\* \* \*

Dr. Kravitz will direct Air Force sponsorship of research in electronics and solid-state sciences at universities, industrial laboratories, and nonprofit research organizations.

A native of New York City, Dr. Kravitz received his B.S. degree in electrical engineering from the University of Kansas in 1954, his M.S. degree in electrical engineering from the U.S. Air Force Institute of Technology in 1955, and his Ph.D. degree in applied physics from Harvard University in 1963.

From 1955 to 1958, he served on active duty as a U.S. Air Force contracting officer at Wright Air Development Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. Since 1963, he has worked at the GE Research and Development Center, where he has studied luminescent systems, phosphors, lattice vibrations, and solid-state lamps.

In 1972, Dr. Kravitz was appointed manager of the center's light emitting diode array program. In this position, he has directed research aimed at evaluating and developing display systems using small, high density light-emitting elements — semiconductor devices that are finding application in a variety of domestic and commercial display systems.

Dr. Kravitz is a member of the American Physical Society. He, his wife and their three sons will reside at 7128 Wolfree Lane in Rockville, Md.

Schenectady Gazette  
Dec. 9, 1973



## 15. THE AIR FORCE OFFICE OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH 1973-1981

### 15.1 DIRECTOR OF ELECTRONICS AND MATERIALS 1973-1978

I began work at AFOSR on December 3, 1973. The work consisted of awarding contracts to researchers based on proposals that they submitted. The proposals were usually very good, but very few new projects were funded because most of our budget was committed to continuing contracts. So the program managers spent most of their time reading proposals and writing letters declining them. My secretary brought the declination letters to me for my signature. This was disappointing.

I became very stressed by the commute from Rockville to Arlington. Although the nominal travel time between home and office was only 30 minutes, it often was more than an hour when traffic backed up on GW highway in Virginia. The commute left me little time or energy to do anything else.

With the president consumed by Watergate, Congress began to consider massive defense budget cuts in the wake of the Vietnam War. The Air Force was rumored to disband AFOSR to conserve operating funds. The contract funds would be turned over to the Wright Field Laboratories for management, an action that those laboratories had been promoting for some time.

I was scared that AFOSR would close and, with GE in trouble, my leave of absence would prove worthless. I kept reminding myself that I had the cash equivalent of about 4 months of living expenses in which to find another job. But with all the layoffs in Washington, I worried that that time might not be enough. This period of great uncertainty lasted through the spring of 1974. Some nights I came home so exhausted and stressed out that I went straight to bed. Other times I found stress relief by swimming to physical exhaustion at the JCC. Before the oil embargo ended in March, I found that just walking in Giant and seeing people acting normally was helpful after a day of constant bad news at work.

April 1974 - **Marge** had a medical crisis that added to my work stress. She had to go to Washington Hospital Center for serious surgery. My evening commute went up North Capital Street to the hospital for the days she was in the hospital. I can't recall how we managed during this time.

**Saul** was also preparing for his June Bar Mitzvah. I took him to his lessons at the Bnai Israel annex on Georgia Avenue, trying to act as if nothing else was happening.

June 1974 -. Bill Price, the AFOSR Director, "decided" to retire. We wondered whether that was the first step in abolishing AFOSR. At the same time a new Assistant Secretary had fired our advocate, Bill Lehmann, from his job in the Pentagon. These losses increased my insecurity. But Lehmann, through his contacts with general officers who had been his AFIT students, landed the job as Price's replacement. Lehmann then worked quickly with the Air Force Science Advisory Board to get the Secretary of the Air Force to sign a letter that secured the future, if not the budget, of AFOSR so long as that Secretary was in office. Lehmann also began inviting high-ranking officers to hear what we did. As at GE, I became one of the speakers he relied on. We still wondered what the future held because many people simply didn't trust Lehmann's judgment.

June 1974 - **Saul's** Bar Mitzvah was in the old Bnai Israel building on 16<sup>th</sup> St. He was very impressive. We had a family dinner that night in our basement. We wanted it to be as festive as Alan's had been. But it wasn't, given the shabby surroundings, Marge's physical condition and my



weariness. Saul may not have noticed, but I felt we had let him down.

July 1974 -. With AFOSR's future somewhat stabilized, I accepted an invitation to serve on a NASA committee to review "Materials Processing in Space" at a NASA conference on Space Applications, in Snowmass, Colorado. I also decided to make a family trip out of the meeting. We rented a camping trailer and drove to Colorado.

The review committee consisted of about fifteen scientists who were experts in the specific areas of materials processing that NASA wanted to investigate in an earth-orbiting laboratory. In such an orbit the gravitational attraction of the earth is balanced out by the centrifugal force derived from the circular orbit. We were to review the NASA arguments for such processing experiments and recommend the one we thought had the most promise.

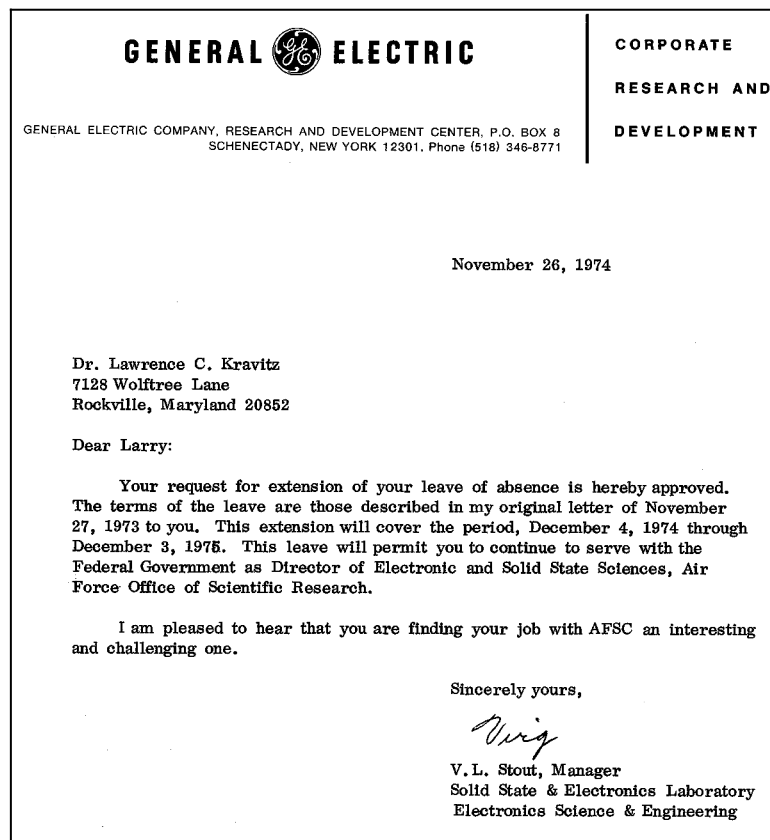
We decided, after listening to briefings of all the proposals, that none of the proposals held any promise. I didn't stay to write the final report, which was supposed to tactfully advise that the project was worthless. The report didn't stop NASA from continuing the experiments, but they did slowly stop. The press releases that touted the great economic benefits to flow from processing materials in space continued along with the experiments. This was my first experience with intentional lying to justify federal research and development. I saw more of the same with time.

October 1974 -. My next challenge was to defend my budget to staffers in the Department of Defense. Although Congress appropriates the funds for Air Force Basic Research, it never appropriates exactly the amount that the president's budget requests. The Air Force also has some limited authority to reapportion the amount that Congress appropriates. The Department of Defense therefore reviews the final allotments to the Air Force programs in what is called an "Apportionment Review". Staffers in the Department of Defense had begun to use this review as their excuse to examine the detailed contents of the electronics research programs, rather than just the funding allocations. They then approved the funding subject to certain of their "concerns". The Air Force typically responded to these "concerns" by transferring the disputed funds from the electronics programs to some other research area where the staffers were not so aggressive. The DOD staffers were thereby slowly starving the funding of electronics research by their clumsy attempt to improve its quality.

Their review of my programs was scheduled for October. The program had lost some money the prior year because my program managers had allowed them to raise certain "concerns". I didn't want to suffer another reduction. Therefore I decided to brief the entire program myself and deal with their concerns right on the spot to avert having these concerns sent to the Air Force in a memorandum. My plan succeeded. I anticipated the issues and survived the review without any loss of funding. This was a great relief. I also earned the reputation with the DOD staff as someone who knew the technology he was managing, and was not a typical government bureaucrat. This was a reputation I was determined to keep.

November 1974 -. **Alan** surprised us by announcing that he didn't want to return to Woodward High School for his senior year. He felt that, except for the final year of English, his advanced standing from HACD left him with little to take. I immediately started calling schools to see where he could get early admission. We were too late at most places. The University of Delaware was still open. He applied there.





### The first renewal of my leave of absence

December 1974 - Bill Lehmann shocked us all in December. A few months earlier he had used his political connections to assure the survival of AFOSR. Now Lehmann revealed that the Air Force was abolishing the headquarters staff that managed the distribution of basic research funds in to the Air Force Laboratories and AFOSR. Instead AFOSR would manage the distribution of the funds to itself and to the Laboratories. We would be the “Single Manager” of basic research for the Air Force. Each AFOSR director was thereafter expected to manage the funds in his technical area. I became the manager of all funds for electronics and materials. These programs were so large that I managed over one third of the entire AFOSR budget.

Lehmann’s next surprise was that we were moving from Arlington to Bolling Air Force Base in Southeast Washington, DC. This move took us from the commercial “high rent district” to an abandoned building on Bolling Air Force Base. It made us appear to be more a “part of the Air Force”, he said.

The Bolling building was a two-story frame structure that had been built in the 1920s when Bolling was an active airstrip. The building was very run down and had a very musty smell from having been vacant for over a year. We were all depressed by the change from Arlington. My commute was extended to about fifty minutes on a good day. We were promised that the building would be rehabbed, but we didn’t trust the promise.

I immediately set to work to establish myself as the manager for the electronics and materials technical areas. This was difficult initially because the managers of the recipient laboratories in Lexington, Mass, and Dayton, Ohio didn’t believe that I had the authority to do more than just pass



their budgets along as the Air Force staffers had done. I decided that, as manager, I would review their programs in the same way that the DOD staffers did and eliminate any problems within the Air Force before they became evident to outsiders in DOD. This was apparently a novel idea for an Air Force manager. None of the laboratory directors scrubbed their own programs that way. Their reviews were for information, not for control. I demanded control. My authority was challenged, but quickly established. I had control.

To exercise of the degree of program control I wanted, I had to visit the laboratories as well as contractors. This travel was facilitated by the executive jet service of the Air Force. My grade level was the equivalent of a one-star general officer. I could request a T-39 six-passenger jet to take me to Massachusetts or Ohio. On arrival a staff car and driver would be at my service while I was there. For overnight stays I had access to the VIP suites at the Visiting Officer Quarters. While the travel was easy, the job took me away from home for increasing periods of time.

March 1974 -. I took **Alan** for his interview at the University of Delaware. We walked through the Physics building beforehand. By coincidence I saw the names of faculty members who I knew from GE and Harvard. They encouraged Alan to study Physics in their department.

Alan's interview went well. The interviewer asked him why he chose the University of Delaware. He told the surprised interviewer that he was influenced by the faculty student ratio and the ratio of library books per student. He was also, by then, a National Merit Scholarship Finalist. He was admitted for the fall semester.

June 1975 -. I was appointed to be the US Representative to the NATO Defense Research Group Panel for Electronics. Such panels were designed as NATO vehicles for US-European cooperation. I quickly learned that the Europeans conducted very little electronics research within their defense establishments. And, being competitors with one another, they only pretended to cooperate with what little they had. The Europeans spent far less of their Gross National Product on their own defense than the United States. Their main aim in the Defense Research Group was to establish links to the US defense laboratories, which were their main sources of technology. I was surprised to learn that many of the Europeans knew our labs as well as I did. They were eager for me to arrange trips for them. I disappointed them.

The NATO staffer for our group was "General" Naslin, a pompous little Frenchman. I thought at first that he was a real military general. He was only an "Ingénieur General" which was a rank in the French civil service. He was the ultimate bureaucrat. He insisted that every subject that we discussed had to have specific "terms of reference" typed up and distributed before we could start a discussion. He generated so much paper over trivial details that I came away with more than I could easily carry.

Our panel met twice each year, once at NATO Headquarters in Brussels in January and again in June at one of the country defense establishments. My first June meeting was in Denmark. Then Holland ( The Hague), France (Paris), Norway (Oslo), Germany (Munich at the Oktoberfest), and England (Malverne, UK). (Greece and Italy didn't participate). After UK came US and my turn to host a meeting. But the Panel didn't want to have a meeting in the US. They wanted to make their own appointments and roam around the whole country. That was fine with me.

We all spoke English at our meetings, except in Brussels and Paris where the French delegates spoke French, we had French translators, and we wore headphones. This was a French government



policy. The meetings generally lasted two days. The middle of each day was consumed by a long lunch with wine, followed by cappuccino and drinks in a lounge. I could barely keep my eyes open afterward, especially when the speaker darkened the room to show slides. I soon realized that this relaxed atmosphere was typical. Europeans don't work as hard as Americans. They had more social benefits and longer vacations and more holidays. But, I concluded, we live better than they do.

Nothing useful came out of the Defense Research Group as far as I could see. It was just one big façade for NATO unity. It provided some jobs for NATO bureaucrats and interesting travel for the delegates. Most delegates dropped out after they had seen what they wanted of the other countries.

September 1975 - I took **Alan** to enroll at the University of Delaware. Since he was a late registrant, he didn't get a regular dorm room. He was assigned to a dorm of physical education majors. We didn't know this when we arrived and Alan started unpacking. His roommate came in shortly thereafter carrying a set of bar bells, his bulging muscles showing through his tight t-shirt. Alan looked like a little boy standing next to him. After introductions, "Herc" raised one bed over the other to make bunk beds. He assured me that Alan would have the lower bed and be "taken care of".

Alan waved from the doorway of the dorm as I drove off. He looked so little that I felt I shouldn't leave him. But I drove off. The dorm was the home of the football team. They took care of him.

February 1978 - Bill Lehmann wanted to extend the influence of AFOSR by getting people from AFOSR to take a temporary assignment in a higher headquarters and, while there, promote AFOSR. He found a part-time assignment for me with the Secretary of the Air Force in February of 1978.

The Secretary of the Air Force, John Stetson, had come from the oil industry. He was concerned that the Air Force has a domestic source of fuel in case another oil embargo occurred. The domestic source he wanted to promote was the oil shale reserve in Colorado. He couldn't, however, find anyone on his staff who was competent or willing to be the point man to industrialize the oil shale for aviation fuel. Bill Lehmann, hearing of this problem, nominated me.

My official status was the secretary's representative to the Defense Synthetic Fuels Task Force. This task force was dominated by the Navy, which had a Synthetic Fuels Office and already established funding. The only comparable group in the Air Force was a small group at Wright Field that mostly dealt with fuel specifications. My unofficial status was as special assistant to the Secretary, Under Secretary, and Assistant Secretary for R&D. They let me know that I had access to them any time I needed it. They insisted that I have an office near them in the Pentagon.

This assignment became a political nightmare. The person leading the task force was a senior person in the Office of the Secretary of Defense who was also in the reporting channel for AFOSR. My regular job at AFOSR was as part of the "blue suit" Air Force under the Chief of Staff. The Secretary was supposed to be senior to the Chief of Staff. So I was sitting on both sides of the civilian-military fence. Bill Lehmann and others told me to be "very careful".

June 1978- **Steve's** bar mitzvah was held on June 3, 1978, in the new B'nai Israel building on Montrose Road. I took him there to hear him chant from the bima a few nights beforehand. I thought he sounded very nice. Fortunately for Steve, his parasha, B'hukkotai, had some sections that Cantor Friedman wouldn't let him read. Saul read those. I was very pleased to hear Steve on the bima and can still hear his rendition when the service reaches a particular point.



We had the usual problem of providing hospitality for the walkers in the family and feeding them from Friday night until they left about noon on Sunday. Just as we were about to relax on Sunday, Martha and Meir drove up. They didn't want to "miss the bar mitzvah", which they already had as far as we were concerned.

## 15.2 DIRECTOR OF AFOSR 1978-1981

June 1978 -. The office contacted me while we were on a family trip after Steve's bar mitzvah. The message was to call General Hendricks, Bill Lehmann's boss, at Andrews Air Force Base. Hendricks told me that Bill Lehmann was being transferred to the Weapons Lab in Albuquerque, a job he always wanted. Hendricks asked me whether I would be interested in replacing Lehmann as Director of AFOSR. Of course I leapt at this opportunity.

AFOSR had six technical directorates covering Aeronautics, Life Science, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, and Electronics and Materials. There were also three support directorates for Contracts, Plans and Operations, and Legal. Two remote units were also attached to AFOSR. A London office consisting of a Colonel and about eight officers kept track of technology developments in Europe and the Middle East for the Air Force. A small Laboratory at the Air Force Academy provided research experience for the cadets. I was the first Director to ever have been promoted from within and to bring the insight of an insider.

One of my immediate objectives was to get the other directors to manage their laboratory programs with the same intensity that I had managed the electronics and materials programs. Another was to improve the quality of our military personnel by selecting only promotable officers with PhD's and seeing that they were subsequently promoted. The third was to institute major cross directorate initiatives with bigger amounts of money so as to make bigger impacts in a shorter time.

I also had to replace myself as Director of Electronics and Materials Research. This wasn't easy. The Carter administration had established the Senior Executive Service for people of the GS 15-18 grades. I was a charter member of the Senior Executive Service at grade SES-2 (the grades ranked upward from SES-1 to SES-6). Now, as Director of AFOSR, I became an SES-4. But the new system made recruiting from outside the government virtually impossible. I found that I couldn't recruit anyone the way Bill Price recruited me. Frustrated, I hired someone who had worked at the Pentagon. This proved to be a mistake.

My Director of Contracts was also a problem. He had convinced my predecessors that the Contracts Directorate was not really under the AFOSR Director's control. Contracts, he asserted, was really part of the headquarters contracts unit, but was only co-located at AFOSR for administrative convenience. He spent a lot of time out of the building, always attended the staff meetings at the headquarters, and rebuffed any suggestions for improved procedures because of his claim that he was part of the organization only on paper but really reported to a "higher authority". I had learned a different story while drinking beer with the headquarters people after a softball game. They wondered why he came to their staff meetings when they considered him part of AFOSR. My contracts director wasn't truthful. I wanted to get rid of him.

Summer 1978 - Alan **and** Saul were working at NIH during the summer of 1978, Alan in a medical department and Saul in the computer department. They got together after work to create a blackjack bidding algorithm that their computations told them would not fail. Toward the end of the summer, when their system all worked out, I was invited to speak at a Synthetic Fuels Conference in Las Vegas. After my talk I went to the blackjack tables to exercise their algorithm. I spent thirty



minutes at the table before I had lost the twenty dollars I had set aside for testing their algorithm.

September 1978 - Alan began his senior year at Delaware. He had majored in Chemistry and edited the campus newspaper. He rejected the thought of working in the chemical industry after graduation because he thought they would probably use him as a salesman. He also rejected graduate school because, as he told me: "I don't want to work in a laboratory like you did." This left medical school, an option that he mentioned as a career goal on his application for the national Merit Scholarship three years earlier. Medical School applications required recommendations, which, at Delaware, came from a faculty committee. He scheduled the meeting with the committee.

Alan called home after his meeting with the faculty representative of the medical school committee to report that his meeting had gone badly. Alan and the interviewer had argued over whether his aim in medicine was to help people or to just make money. Alan was sure he wouldn't get a recommendation. He asked what he should do?

I told him that he didn't need to depend on the committee for recommendations. As Editor in Chief of the campus newspaper, he knew the Deans and the President of the University personally. I told him to go to the highest ranking people he knew and solicit recommendations. He took my advice, got the recommendations, and was admitted to Medical School. The committee may not have known how to write a convincing recommendation. Alan didn't think that any of the people they recommended were admitted that year.

Sept 1979 - **Alan** started Medical School in Baltimore. He and another fellow rented an apartment on the ground floor of a row house on West Lombard Street. The house appeared presentable from the outside. The inside was an infested slum. We were appalled to think of Alan living there. We urged him to look for a place that we could buy as an investment, figuring that we could profit by paying Alan to manage the property and renting space to other medical students. He began looking.

January 1980 - **Saul** had started at Johns Hopkins in 1978. By January 1980 he was considering spending his junior year studying in Israel, but was uncertain where. I asked my London office to set up a tour of Israeli university research facilities where we might consider sponsoring research. The tour was scheduled right after my NATO meeting in Brussels in January. Wherever we went in Israel I solicited opinions from my hosts on Saul's options. I concluded that the Physics department at Ben Gurion University was the best place for him. Saul agreed. That is where he went for the 1980-81 school year.

March 1980 - **Alan** fell in love with a row house on Tyson Street in Baltimore. We bought the place on March 31, 1980, for \$65,000. The mortgage was \$48,750.

February 1979 - My contracts director retired after being embarrassed by two incidents. The first incident involved discovery of mismanagement in his department. I had contracted with Wang to develop a computer based information system for AFOSR. They discovered, in their study of the paper flow in the contracts directorate, that the paper flow in the contracts department seemed to loop back and forth among the desks for no reason. The contracts director was embarrassed by Wang's finding, especially since he was always complaining that he was understaffed. He became the butt of jokes.

The second incident embarrassed him but scared me. He was our representative on a committee of Directors of Contracts that was tracking legislation governing contracts and grants. I considered this



legislation a threat because our financial planning and technical proposal schedule presumed that we could issue grants. He kept assuring us that we were under no threat to lose our authority to issue grants for research. He then shocked me in December by announcing that we were going to lose our authority to issue grants in January. After January we could only issue contracts. The consequence of this sudden shift was that we could end up with an enormous amount of unspent money by the end of the fiscal year. To avoid this loss, all of our grants had to be converted to contracts before the end of January.

I ordered that the Contracts Directorate cancel all vacations and travel until we had gotten new proposals from our contractors and had converted all of our grants to contracts. When the Director of Contracts balked, citing his independence, I called his bluff by telling him that he worked for me and would take orders from me. Since he had conned my predecessors into believing he belonged to the headquarters, he was surprised to hear me being so direct. But he knew that what I said was true.

I really didn't think we could convert all of our grants to contracts in January. With so much unspent money remaining on our books, I was certain that I would be transferred to some obscure base where I would have to resign. Marge and I went to dinner near DuPont Circle right after I gave the order for the forced march. My stomach was churning so much I could hardly eat anything. I was already thinking about what I would do when I was fired. The organization surprised me. We converted all of the grants and had no unspent money exposure at the end of the fiscal year. The narrow escape didn't shield the Director of Contracts from the blame for the exercise. He retired shortly thereafter.

March 1980 - As I dug further into the synthetic fuels business I learned how complex a business it was. The apathy of the blue-suit Air Force was due to the fact that it didn't procure aviation fuels.



**My Air Force Shale Oil team on a visit to the Occidental oil shale mine in Colorado. I am the second from the right.**

Fuels were purchased by the Defense Fuels Supply Center for all of the services according to specifications provided by the services. John Stetson's goal of providing a dedicated source of aviation fuel for the Air Force was therefore viewed with suspicion by everyone. The flying Air Force was nervous about the effect of any new fuel on the durability of its aircraft engines and components. The financial people in the Air Force were nervous that the Secretary of the Air Force would order a new fuels development program without a specific congressional appropriation and force them to take the money for this program from

ongoing programs. The Defense Department people worried that an Air Force fuels program would destroy the commodity buying leverage of the Defense Fuels Supply Agency. Finally, the newly established Department of Energy considered the exploitation of the Oil Shale resource as their mission, and not the mission of the Air Force. Meanwhile, out in Colorado, Occidental Petroleum and TOSCO, The Oil Shale Company, were waiting in vain for someone in the government to help it develop the oil shale resource. They looked to John Stetson for that leadership. John Stetson

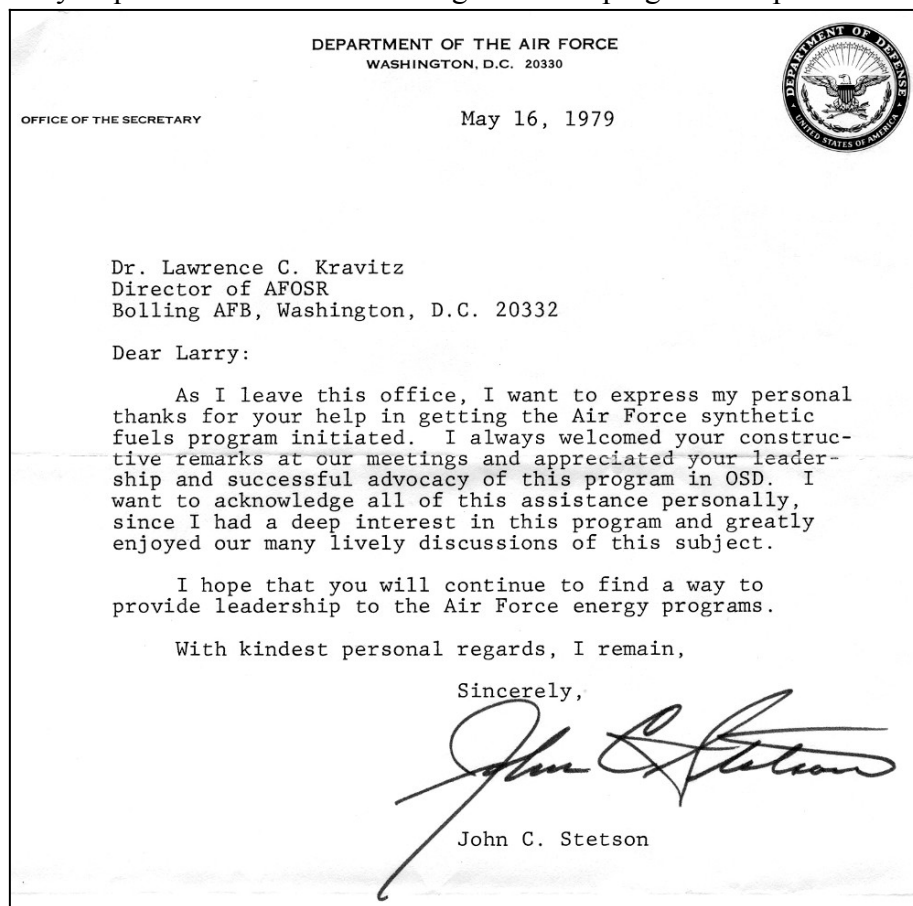


looked to me.

I finally figured out how this could be done while satisfying all of the conflicting demands and without jeopardizing the credibility I needed to be the Director of AFOSR.

I talked the Tactical Air Force into allowing its Hill Air Force Base in Utah to dedicate two planes to the use of synthetic fuel from TOSCO. The performance of the engines on these planes would be monitored by the Ogden Logistics Center, where the engines are overhauled, which is located at nearby Ogden, Utah. The fuel, according to specifications set by the Air Force Fuels Laboratory in Dayton Ohio, would be hauled from the Colorado refinery to Hill Air Force Base by the Defense Fuel Supply Center. All we needed was a sponsor, someone who would pay the refiner for the fuel and offset the costs to the participants.

About this time the staffs of two Senate committees became interested in the "Air Force Fuels Initiative." They requested an informal briefing about the program and possible sources of funds.



**Letter from the Secretary of the Air Force**

The Secretary told me to go and represent him as best I could. Fortunately for me, Congress had just appropriated funds to the Department of Energy for "Commercialization of Novel Sources of Energy." I knew they were just getting started and were looking for credible projects. The Senate staffers responded very positively to my outline of the validation program using Hill and Ogden Air Force Bases. As to funding, I told them that we were going to approach the Department of Energy's Commercialization program. They thought that this was such a great idea that they were going to advocate it to the Department of Energy. And that is how the program got off the ground. John Stetson had left the Air Force by then. I was able to turn the program back to the fuels people at



Wright Field to coordinate, and go back to only running AFOSR.

I really enjoyed being the Director of AFOSR. I was very comfortable in the Air Force environment. The election of new presidents, like Carter and Reagan, with all the changes in political appointees that followed, didn't unnerve me the way they did when I first came to AFOSR. I found that just the contrary was the case. Changes in management only added to the power of permanent civil servants like me.

After a few years on the job I found I had more longevity than most of the Air Force and political appointees I dealt with. They relied on people like me to show them how the system worked and to keep them from making mistakes. So long as I kept my reputation intact, these relationships strengthened my network of influence. There was a personal downside to this longevity, however. The Air Force officers who were constantly rotating through the higher headquarters were of a constant age. I joked that the Air Force officers were biodegradable. When a colonel became 44 years old he was retired. Generals each had a retirement age above 44 in accord with rank, while junior officers retired earlier. Political appointees also seemed to be of some constant age. I saw this age difference start to grow in about 1980 when I was 48 and the younger Reagan people started to come around. I wondered whether they viewed me as an old fogie who had been in office forever.

Two other issues began to bother me at the same time. One was the salary. Congress had been afraid to raise its own pay for a couple of years, in spite of inflation. The inept Carter administration was afraid to push congress for fear of a public reaction against increases for the senior government people. My pay was therefore fixed for a couple of years while I could see that we were allowing our contractors to bill us for 4% inflation raises for their people. In response to complaints from government employees, Carter's head of the Office of Personnel Management told the Washington Post "if these people were worth more money they should leave the government and go get it." Alan read this comment. He asked me whether it was true that I wasn't worth more money.

The salary issue was aggravated in December 1980 when I was awarded a bonus for outstanding performance. The amount of the bonus was a measly \$2000. This was considered a big deal in the government.

The other issue beside the salary was my inability to recruit top quality civilian scientists. The problem wasn't money at their grades; it was that the Carter people had screwed up the hiring process to assure that racial minorities and women got a cracks at the "good government jobs." The multiple reviews that Carter put into this process, starting from advertising openings, screening resumes, interviewing, selecting, offering, each acted like a speed bump to slow the process without any benefit whatsoever. The hiring process took so long that the original people who answered the ads weren't available anymore by the time we were able to make them an offer. The only people who would wait that long were people we didn't want. As a result we filled several openings with competent people who came to us as "visiting scientists" from universities, but they didn't stay long. I didn't feel that I was able to build the organization for the long haul the way I wanted to.

I hoped the incoming Reagan administration would do something about the civilian personnel mess and get Congress to give us a raise. Unfortunately, the country was in a mild recession when Reagan came in. Given his platform of a "smaller government", I didn't see that civilian salaries would have a high priority.

I could have actively looked for another job. I was approached several times with feelers about jobs,



but they were all in other places. I thought about the jobs that other people in government R&D had taken. Most of them were with contracting firms. A few had gone to universities in various capacities. But none had gone on to manage research. Thus I found myself treading water, wondering whether the next seventeen years, until I was 65 and could retire, would be like the last three years.

One of the jobs that looked interesting, and would retrain me for other work in the Washington area, was that of lobbyist to Congress. The Air Force used general officers as “Congressional Liaisons”. I wondered whether I could fit in. I raised this question one day when I was having lunch with Hans Mark, now Secretary of the Air Force, in the Air Force executive dining room in the Pentagon. He had invited me to review some synthetic fuel issues. During our lunch a three star general interrupted to ask Mark a question about the spy satellite funding (Mark was the senior government manager responsible for the launches and control of the spy satellites). When the general left us I said: “Hans, do you think a job like that would be something I should shoot for.” He responded “Larry, forget it. I’ve got fifty of those guys and I have only one of you.” I was reminded of his reaction many years later when I shared an office suite at Allied Signal with the company’s lobbyists, all of whom had been “Congressional Liaisons” in DOD. They really didn’t think their jobs amounted to much. I was glad that Hans steered me off.

One concern that lurked in the back of my mind occasionally was whether I could cope with the stress of industry after working in government. Although many people made the transition successfully, my friend Dick Roberts didn’t. Dick had been a manager at the GE lab and had gone into government work at the Bureau of Standards about a year before I left the lab. He was also encouraged to believe that the government tour would be a career-broadening move that would help him when he returned to GE. After about four years in government, he returned to GE in a strategic planning job at corporate headquarters in Fairfield, Connecticut. He left home for work one morning, but didn’t get past the driveway. He went into the garage, doused himself with gasoline, and set himself ablaze. His suicide, and Roy Apker’s earlier, entered my thinking about returning to industry. Nevertheless, I thought I could do it. The concern seemed to pass.

My opportunity came through Jack Martin, who had been the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force under Stetson and Mark. In 1980, as the Reagan government came in, he wanted out, in spite of his Republican credentials. He went to the Bendix corporation as Vice President of R&D. Bendix, under Bill Agee, was in the process of restructuring itself to look like a major corporation capable of growing through acquisitions. Agee thought he needed a corporate R&D center that did “far out” research in a location far from Detroit. Jack Martin’s job was to organize this center from the remnant of an older corporate lab and build the new laboratory. He purchased a plot of land in Gaithersburg, along I-270, as the site of the new laboratory building. He also leased a building in Columbia, Maryland, for the provisional laboratory until the new building was built.

March 1981- Jack Martin offered me the position of Director of Research in the new laboratory with a 10% increase in salary.

I went through the process of meeting Martin’s boss, John Weill, at the Bendix headquarters in Southfield, Michigan. While waiting for Weill, I noticed that many of the executive offices seemed well worn but were currently out of use. I wondered why, but was too timid to ask. I learned later that Agee had fired all of the senior vice presidents who had occupied these offices when they disagreed with him. (Probably also because of conflict with Agee over the role of his female financial analyst, Mary Cunningham, with whom he was having an affair.)



Weill described his vision of the new Bendix laboratory as a replica of the GE corporate lab that he had admired when he worked in the GE computer business in Syracuse. When I got the firm offer I told my boss, General Dale Ward.

I told Gen. Ward that it was hopeless to think of recruiting a civilian to replace me because that would take more than a year. I wanted to leave in two months, by June 1981. I recommended a senior colonel, the commander of the Hanscom Laboratory, to replace me, with a civilian recruited to replace him. Ward agreed with the strategy. But the colonel I recommended proved to be a disaster.

The announcement that I was leaving AFOSR caused a depression in the organization. People couldn't understand why I would leave such a plum job. They thought that there was more to the situation than I was willing to say. Something was afoot. Many of them were open enough to tell me that it made them very insecure.

June 1981-We had a "Change of Command" ceremony. Stan Maratos, the Base Commander and my friend from high school, arranged for the Air Force Rifle Team and the Drum and Bugle Corps to be part of the ceremony. The directors were too limp to make a party of any sort so we catered one for them using stuff from a vegetarian-dairy carryout that Marge liked in Washington. On the whole, I thought it was a fitting occasion. General Ward's comments contributed toward assuring people that my leaving was not an omen of anything in store for AFOSR

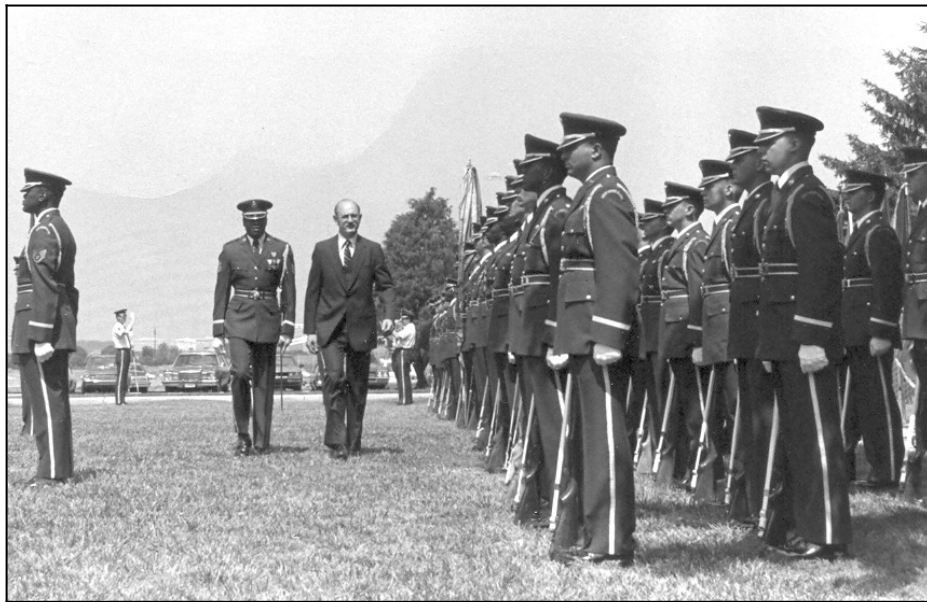


**Marching to the Change of Command Ceremony. Following me are General Dale Ward, Colonel Stanley Maratos, Base Commander, and Colonel James Baker, my successor.**



**General Ward is giving me the AFOSR flag to transfer to Baker. The commander of the Air Force drill team is behind me.**





**Marching in review of the Air Force Drill Team. The marching band is playing in the background.**



**My farewell speech. The Honor Guard is in the background.**



## **16. THE BENDIX CORPORATION 1981-1983**

### **16.1 BENDIX ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY CENTER**

June 1981. The temporary Bendix Advanced Technology Center was located on Route 108 in Columbia, MD. The driving time from home was about 50 minutes. The one story building surrounded a courtyard with a basement below one end. It enclosed 55,000 square feet of floor space for offices and labs. I arrived before all of the floor space was allocated.

My first clue about where I stood in this corporation came in the discussion of floor space with the controller, Andy Murany. I found out that there were questions I should have asked before I took the job, but, given the rarity of a job to manage corporate research in the Washington area, I don't think the answers would have made any difference.

I found that the controller set the policy on all financial resources. This included floor space since we were renting the place by the square foot. The corporate controller's rules on how much floor space a person at my grade level could occupy allowed me a lot less than I was used to in the Air Force. Neither, at my grade level, could I have notepaper with my name printed on it. And so on. While these rules surprised me, they didn't faze me.

I designed my modest office to interconnect with a large conference room and a commons area outside where small groups could gather. This met the controller's guidelines and gave me more space than I had in the Air Force.

I found that the Human Resources Director thought he owned the research people. He only loaned them out to me. Thus the employees were expected to go to HR to discuss any personal issues. The problem, as I soon found out, was that the HR Director, Bob Cox, had spent his whole Bendix career disputing contracts with the United Auto Workers. He regarded the research work force with the same suspicion as he regarded a shop steward. I found that the researchers were hostile to Cox behind his back. They didn't go to him. They came to me.

### **16.2 MANAGING WITHOUT MANAGERS**

My first interaction with HR occurred on my second day when I asked whether I could hire someone who I thought would be a great first level line manager. Cox agreed to the interview and the offer, but then he told me he couldn't approve of my appointing any first level line managers. I was in shock. The laboratory was expected to grow to over 200 research staff. How could I ever manage so many people without a management infrastructure?

I had never asked Jack Martin about the proposed infrastructure for the laboratory. I did ask him about my relationship with the HR Director and the Controller. His answer, that I would be "first among equals." He was less than totally honest. I never thought to ask him about infrastructure since all of the research organizations I had seen had a common style. But he had never worked in a research organization. Neither had his boss nor had Bob Cox. Starting from the observation that there had been too many managers in the old research lab, they put their empty heads together and concluded that there should be no managers in this one. They wanted the research to proceed by congenial work-group teams. My job was to manage this collection of work group teams. They hadn't thought through the downstream problems of performance reviews, salary management, and



expenditure controls. I had to invent solutions to those problems.

### **16.3 THE RESEARCH PROGRAM**

My next surprise came when I looked at the projects that the lab had been organized to pursue. I couldn't understand why the Bendix Corporation would be spending money on activities that could only minimally benefit the corporation. Looking for answers, I learned the origin of these projects. John Weill had convened a Technical Advisory Group composed of people who he considered the intellectuals of their product divisions. These intellectuals, it turned out, were really the technical black sheep of their divisions. Starting with Bill Agee's guidance that he wanted the lab to do "far out" research with no immediate economic benefit to the divisions, these so called intellectuals had indeed created projects of little apparent value to the company.

### **16.4 RECRUITING SCIENTISTS**

"Management by Objective" was a fad then. Each manager had objectives for the time period and was measured against whether he met the objective. One of Jack Martin's objectives was to maintain a certain rate of hiring staff. This objective fed down to Bob Cox and his HR staff who were measured by the number of warm bodies they signed up each month. Cox met his objective by sending an HR recruiter to collect resumes at the midwestern campuses where Bendix had traditionally been successful at hiring people. These included such second tier schools as Notre Dame, Michigan State, Penn State and others. They didn't include MIT or any Ivy League schools. The embryonic work groups who were themselves just fresh out of school then ranked the collected resumes. Cox then went down the rankings offering interview trips and making offers until he had an acceptance. No candidate was eliminated, only ranked. I couldn't believe this process.

As soon as I caught on to his recruiting system, I put a stop to it. I insisted that each candidate give a seminar, after which I met with the candidate personally. Following that interview I had pretty much made up my mind whether I wanted the person or not. Only those we wanted to hire got to spend the afternoon touring the lab. The others were dismissed after lunch. Cox was furious. He accused me of sabotaging his objectives and his incentive compensation. I offered him a compromise. I told him that I wanted to send a technical person on the recruiting trip to screen candidates on campus and to invite back only people that I would hire. He begrudgingly agreed. We expanded our recruiting to include MIT and Cornell where we began competing with the major corporate labs. We recruited some good people with that system.

### **16.5 INFANTICIDE**

Another crazy idea of the "founding fathers" that I learned about after a year had passed was their concept of "infanticide." This applied to both projects and people.

Applied to projects, "infanticide" meant that a certain fraction of new projects should be killed after their first year if they haven't produced any output. Never mind the contradiction with the notion that the lab was set up to do "far out" research with output deferred many years.

With regard to people, "infanticide" meant that the people identified as the bottom 10% in performance should be fired each year. Never mind that every new candidate would be looked upon as a threat rather than a colleague, the whole idea of congenial team research would be undermined,



and no one would come to work in such a crazy place. When I heard this idea, I told Cox that if that would actually become the policy that I would leave with the first group.

I also told Jack Martin that the killing of projects that had just barely begun, even though I thought they were wrongheaded, would ruin the spirit of the place. I planned to revector them gradually. Fortunately, I didn't ever have to implement either of these "infanticide" concepts. (Years later, when Martin returned to NASA and was responsible for the NASA labs he told me that he recalled these discussions and found that the NASA labs operated on a similar approach to mine.)

## **16.6 RAMPANT TOURISM**

Although we were supposed to build and operate a laboratory with "far out" projects, no sooner had we begun functioning than the climate for such research changed in Bendix. Bill Agee hired a President for the corporation to allow him more time to pontificate as chairman. John Weill had to defend his budget, including our lab to the new president. Now we became the tourist stop for everyone that John Weill felt he had to impress. We had to show the visitors why the projects were vital to the businesses, even though the projects were supposedly "far out" and the newly recruited employees hardly had time to learn what the businesses were.

## **16.7 RELATIONS WITH THE OPERATING DIVISIONS**

I visited the divisions' Directors of Engineering to learn about their businesses and how we could contribute. They told me about the demise of the old Bendix laboratory and that the new lab was the idea of Bill Agee but wasn't supported by the business managers.

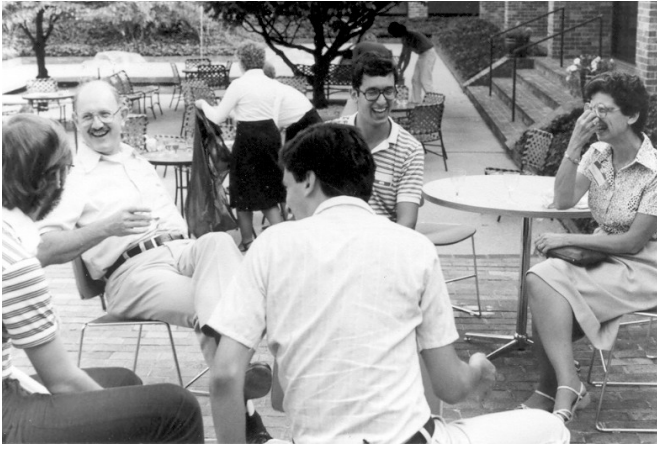
I saw this problem firsthand when I was asked to brief the management of the Automotive Sector. These managers were responsible for brakes and steering systems for Ford and Chrysler cars and for Autolite spark plugs and Fram air filters. After I had finished the briefing someone asked for a budget breakdown by the areas of the laboratory. Off the top of my head I said that we spent about a million dollars on the aerodynamics of air filters. This caused the President of the Fram Filter Division to explode. "Dr. Kravitz," he said. "I make about 35 cents on each Fram air filter. Do you know how many million air filters I have to sell just to pay for your research?" Fortunately, the sector president shushed him up before I could answer. What I realized then was that Agee's accounting system charged the individual divisions for the work we attributed to their benefit. I could see why many managers were unhappy about our unwanted financial burden.

We had another problem with the businesses, in addition to the financial one. I discovered this problem at my first corporate conference at Jackie Gleason's golf course in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. This was Bill Agee's annual meeting with all of the corporate executives where we had fun and got to know each other informally, while pretending to review matters of high strategy. One of the sessions was an award luncheon at which a number of managers received their awards, each award followed by a lot of clapping and laughter. Jack Martin was the exception. His award was greeted with total silence. He apparently hadn't made a friend in the place. I realized then that I wouldn't survive on his coattails. Neither could he be my mentor. From then on I worked to develop my own personal relationship with the Directors of Engineering and General Managers.



### 16.8 THE END OF THE NEW LABORATORY ON I-270 SEPTEMBER 1981

The first hurdle to overcome in managing without managers was an “open house” within four months after I arrived, complete with tours for company managers and families.



**Our family at the open house. The scene is the courtyard.**

Bill Agee and his staff visited us a few weeks after the open house. The recession of 1981 had already begun to erode profits. Agee’s conceptual objectives for the company had also shifted. He complimented us on the nice job we had done to convert the building to our use. When he found out that our rent, when capitalized, amounted to a small fraction of what a new building would cost, he told his controller to see about buying the building and selling the land on I-270. That ended my dream of working just ten minutes from home. I was very disappointed. I wondered whether leaving AFOSR wasn’t a big mistake.

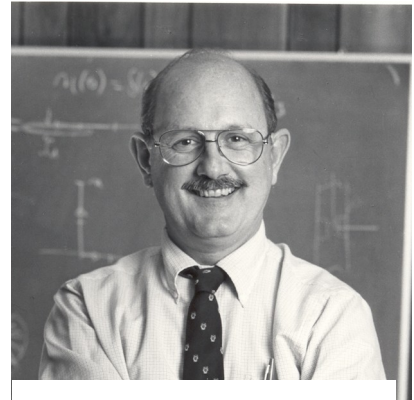
### 16.9 RUNNING THE LABORATORY 1981-1983

I accepted the challenge to manage without managers. The direct contact with the research staff was a positive outcome. My contribution was limited, however, by my limited competence in all of the fields of research. I forced each group to write a proposal for the year, with objectives and approaches and milestones. Then I funded the project team based on their proposal. This worked within limits.

Some of the teams came back to ask me to appoint a manager. They felt that they spent too much time discussing trivia that a manager would decide more efficiently.

Some of the researchers asked for some kind of title change. Their wives were complaining that after a year they hadn’t been “promoted,” while husbands in other companies were being promoted. Thus our flat organization failed to satisfy the wives.

I also quietly scuttled the dumb policy of our “founding fathers” that our people had to work independently of the divisions because of the allegation that the old lab had become merely an extension of some of the divisions. I started joint projects with certain divisions where the skills were appropriate. This slowly revectorized the projects in a positive direction.



**In the conference room.**

Spring 1982- **Saul** called me one day. My secretary called me out of the conference room to tell me that he was on the line. She always smiled when one of the family called, and I always enjoyed the break from the pace. This time Saul called to tell me that he had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa. I was thrilled to get the unexpected news. Saul graduated from Hopkins in June 1982.



June 1983- Alan graduated from Medical School in Baltimore and began his surgical residency in Wilmington, Delaware. He rented a truck to move his furnishings from the house on Tyson Street to a third floor walkup apartment in Wilmington. The moving day was very hot. We worked very hard to get his things from the truck up to his apartment. A week later Steve and I went to Tyson Street to clean up the place for sale. It was quite dirty. When the house didn't sell, I rented it. I was glad to sell it a year later, in June 1984, for \$75,000. The real estate experience barely broke even.

#### **16.10 THE END OF BENDIX- SUMMER 1983**

The president of the company visited us for, we thought, a review of our work. At a break he told us that that very morning every congressman and every defense executive in the Pentagon had received an announcement from him that Bendix was out to buy Martin Marietta. Thus began the Bendix versus Martin Marietta battle that has been written about in books.

We wondered where we would fit into the combined company since Martin Marietta had a research laboratory near the Baltimore airport. The combined company certainly wouldn't need two laboratories. That scenario never unfolded. The merger never happened. Something else happened.

While Bendix was buying up Martin's stock, Martin was buying up Bendix stock. Ivan Boesky was also buying Bendix stock for himself without disclosing his purchases to the SEC. Then both Martin and Boesky offered to sell their shares to Allied Corporation. Thus Allied took control of Bendix. Boesky later went to jail for stock manipulation, but the deed was done. Bendix was finished.

#### **16.11 THE END OF THE BENDIX ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY CENTER- SEPTEMBER 1983**

The Allied-Bendix "merger," like all corporate mergers, was sold to the shareholders on claims of cost savings offered by the "synergies" of the two corporations. In simple talk this means that duplicate people could be eliminated to save money. Even before the merger was legally consummated, merger teams were organized to look for these duplicative people and recommend those to be cut. Our laboratory was an obvious duplicative function that was a ripe "synergy" candidate for cost savings. The Allied/Bendix merger team examined us closely.

They took about three weeks to decide to reduce the laboratory to about half its size. All of the materials related work was terminated. Bendix put a hiring freeze on all of its divisions until the resumes of our impacted people had been reviewed and everyone had an offer someplace. I was very impressed at how the Bendix culture took care of its own people.

The remaining laboratory became the property of the Bendix Aerospace Sector. Jack Martin was ungraciously relieved of his duties and put on "special assignment." Bob Cox, my HR nemesis "decided" to retire. I was left to run the place and manage the draw down. My new boss was Joe McCormack, the Vice President of Engineering in Bendix Aerospace, Headquartered in the USA Today Building in Arlington, VA.

I watched all of this happen, wondering whether there would be a place for me in the remnant of the lab that remained, and whether I was interested in staying on to run a far smaller place than I envisioned when I left AFOSR.



## 16.12 BENDIX AEROSPACE SECTOR –SEPTEMBER 1983

I was totally surprised and disappointed when Joe McCormack told me that I was transferred to work for him in the Arlington Headquarters. Pat Keating, who had once been my assistant at the laboratory, was transferred back to run what remained of the Laboratory. Keating had only recently moved to Arlington, and now he had to move back. I really didn't want to take a "staff job." I always looked down on the staffs when I was at AFOSR. I was crushed.

I called everyone to the cafeteria to make this announcement in person. There was an audible gasp from the people when I told that Keating was their new boss. They clearly weren't happy with Keating. Keating was present. I was a bit embarrassed for him.



At my going-away luncheon. Jack Martin is at the right.

I couldn't figure out whether I was being given the same treatment as Jack Martin: promoted to a place where there was no work to do, from which I could politely outpace myself. This would avoid any messy business of firing me and having to pay severance. Neither did I want to ask the question, not really wanting to hear the answer. The best I could learn was that Bill Purple, the Sector President, had made the decision based on information he received from Gen. Larry Skantze, one of my bosses at AFOSR. I took this as a good sign that I should wait and see how things worked out.

September 1983-**Steven** started college at the University of Rhode Island that Fall. Coincidentally, Bendix's Fram Filter Division wanted us to donate some of our excess lab equipment to the University of Rhode Island Engineering

School. This gave me the chance to visit URI and see Steve in his new environment. Within two months he decided to transfer to the University of Maryland for the spring semester.

## 16.13 BILL AGEE'S SWAN SONG

The "merger" with Allied took a number of months to be legally consummated. When it was almost completed, in April 1984, Agee sponsored one of his management conferences at the swank Boca Beach Hotel at West Palm Beach, Florida. This time wives were invited. Marge didn't want to take vacation days from her job at Aspen, so she stayed at home. I called her after I saw that all of the other wives were there. She then flew down. I met her at the airport with limousine and driver. At the hotel she received a charge card for anything she wanted to buy, including drinks served to the beach cabanas. The feature (only) event of the management conference was a lavish banquet that the hotel catered under a massive tent, complete with a band and open bar. Mary Cunningham, Agee's new wife and former financial analyst, said a very long and syrupy grace before the meal. Everyone was smirking at her piety as she went on and on.

Agee had invited the Chairman of Allied, Ed Hennessy, to attend this orgy, just, I think, to offend him. Hennessy's idea of food for a manager's conference was a cheese sandwich. He was a devout Catholic who would never have stood for an executive like Agee having an affair with a subordinate. After this lavish conference Hennessy bought out Agee's contract, just as Agee planned, to get rid of him.



## 17 ALLIED CORPORATION-AEROSPACE SECTOR

### 17.1 AEROSPACE SECTOR STAFF 1983-1986

I was assigned to an office near Joe McCormack's on top floor of the USA Today building in Arlington. The view of Washington from the river side of this building was truly spectacular. My window looked down the other side of the building onto the Iwo Jima Memorial.

I didn't have any job to immediately fit in to. I wondered what I could usefully do and who would be the customer for my services. While waiting for something to happen, I spent the free time learning about my Morrow Computer. I had ordered several of these personal computers for the laboratory when I found out the scientific computer network was being bogged down by word processing. These Morrow computers ran on a CPM operating system. The IBM PC and Microsoft DOS soon put little Morrow out of business. This was my first chance to actually spend time with a computer.

The first work in my new job resulted from Allied Corporation's (Morristown) demand that McCormack provide a "Technology Plan" for the engineering efforts in all of Bendix's 20 divisions. The Corporate Vice President, Jim Colby, was furious. McCormack had failed to provide this plan by the required date. McCormack asked me to try to "keep Colby happy." This was not hard for me. The technical plan was very similar to the plan I had to submit to Congress each year to justify the AFOSR budget. The "plan" was merely the compilation of the plans of the businesses, packaged into the required format. Since I already knew all of the Directors of Engineering, I only had to solicit their inputs, package them up, and send them to Colby in Morristown.

I recognized that this "planning" had no real value, except as a bureaucratic vehicle for Jim Colby to pretend that he had oversight over all of the technical activity in the corporation. I had seen this pretension before in the Air Force. Although my work had no real value, at least I now had a customer, the Corporate Vice President, Jim Colby.

My second assignment was also a response to a demand by "Morristown" that Bendix Aerospace sponsor several million dollars of research annually at the Corporate Research Center in Morristown. Bill Purple, the Sector President, gave me the responsibility of selecting the work to be done and managing the programs. This activity gave me the chance to directly formulate laboratory programs that were linked to Bendix businesses.

Fall 1983- **Alan** started his residency in Wilmington Delaware in the fall of 1983, just when my travels to New Jersey began. I drove to New Jersey several times, stopping off in Wilmington on the way back to see him. We usually played racquetball at a club he had joined, and then went out for dinner. I then slept over on his couch and went to work the next morning.

About a year later, Bill Purple decided that the technical programs of his Aerospace Divisions were too conservative. He gave me several more million dollars to establish programs in the divisions that were "further out" than the very directed programs they undertook for their immediate customers. By then I was managing a larger budget than had I stayed at the laboratory in Columbia.

One of my other assignments was to evaluate the "Technical Risk" of cost proposals. This evaluation was required before a business could bid for a contract that, if won, would require some



up-front expenses before the contract funding was received. The business had to show that the up-front expenses would be recovered during the contract, and, by a “discounted cash flow” argument, that a hurdle rate of return would be achieved. My job was to assess the technical risk that the business would complete the contract as planned. This was my first contact with cash flow calculations, which are elementary subjects in business schools. I found that most of the contract proposals posed little technical risk because either the orders were for some spares of an old product or the customer didn’t want any exposure to technical risk in a new product. I began to wonder how the Laboratory in Columbia could contribute to future profits if all of the available business was repeat business with little added new technology. I also realized how little I had known about the operation of the business before my reassignment to the headquarters.

My success at “keeping Morristown happy” in the area of technical planning and research funding led to a similar assignment in business planning. These “plans” were actually consolidations of “plans” submitted by the individual businesses. The consolidated plan required a “Sector President’s Overview” that summarized the facts in a concise and optimistic way. The marketing department was responsible for this plan but couldn’t provide an overview that the President, Bill Purple, would accept. I was called in at the last minute to edit their work. Instead, I trashed theirs and wrote my own.

The Sector President’s Overview was very similar in purpose and tone with the Director’s Overview that I had to submit with my budget submission at AFOSR. Bill Purple accepted my Overview without any changes. Thereafter I became Bill Purple’s ghostwriter for the Sector Business Plans that he submitted to the Chairman of the Corporation in Morristown.

As I got deeper into the business planning process in later years I did my own analysis of business trends and division profits. I saw that many of the electronics divisions that were heavily hyped were barely profitable, in spite of their revenues, and that most of the earnings were coming from mechanical businesses that were quite hum-drum. The number of Bill Purple’s businesses could be cut in half without impacting his earnings. But then he would have a much smaller empire and justify a smaller salary. These facts needed to be obscured in the business plans we sent to Morristown.

I was invited to serve on two university advisory boards during this time. My Harvard friend, Jim Merz, became chairman of the EE Department at the University of California at Santa Barbara. He asked me to serve on his advisory board. George Dieter, the Dean of Engineering at the University of Maryland, invited me to be on his. I knew that these boards didn’t exist for the advice they gave. They were tools for the department chairman or dean to pry resources out of his managers. The chairman would ask his advisors whether some additional resource was absolutely necessary. The board’s unequivocal agreement would then be sent to the source of the resources. I had played this game with my board at AFOSR. It never worked to get me any increased resources, but it helped to stem reductions. I served on these boards for several years. The trips to Santa Barbara were fun.



My greatest contribution on the Maryland board was the establishment of a five year AlliedSignal scholarship fund for minority engineers at the University of Maryland.

**Saul** and Beri were married in Pittsburgh in August 1985

My work provided me with an understanding of the business that most people learned in business school. The reassignment from the laboratory was therefore an important step in my personal growth. I wasn't sure where I was going professionally, being close to the top of my professional ladder. But, as long as my compensation increased adequately with time, I was satisfied. I had substantial responsibility. My work was recognized in my compensation. My apparent access to Bill Purple and Morristown people gave me status in the company. This comfortable situation then suddenly changed for the worse.



**Presentation of the scholarship fund check to the university president, John Toll. Steve was present to take this picture.**

## **17.2 ALLIED MERGED WITH SIGNAL 1986.**

Ed Hennessey, the Chairman of Allied, was determined to build Allied through acquisitions. One of his targets was the Hughes Electronics Company. He and Michael Dingman, the Chairman of the Signal Corporation, held some secret meetings for the purpose of jointly bidding for the Hughes. When they realized that they could not outbid General Motors, they decided to merge Allied with Signal.

Signal also had an aerospace business called Garrett Aerospace. This meant that Allied Aerospace and Garrett Aerospace would be merged. The question for us was who would head this merged aerospace company, Bill Purple or the head of Garrett? And where would the new headquarters be, in Arlington or Los Angeles? And which people on the Arlington headquarters staff would survive?

Consultants were brought in to do job analyses and merger teams were formed. To my surprise, I was asked to do the job analysis for all of the people reporting to McCormack and to lead a study of two businesses that might be combined in the merger. The job analysis showed me that most of the staff had more vaguely defined roles than I had. This was especially true of my boss, Joe McCormick, who traveled a lot for reasons that were unclear. This finding surprised me.

My merger team assignment was to decide whether the company needed two divisions making altimeter gauges. I realized that I had nothing to gain by reporting a conclusion that made anyone mad, so I gave the technically correct answer that the technologies were sufficiently different and so were the customers, that two plants were justified. No one really cared about our report.

The merger teams were really a stalling action by the two competing presidents who didn't want to work together and expected Ed Hennessey to appoint one of them over the other. Hennessey seemed



incapable of doing this.

Hennessey finally hired Bob Kirk to be the Aerospace President over the two existing presidents. Kirk delighted us by choosing our USA Today building in Arlington as his headquarters location. Kirk rented additional space on a lower floor and hired staff. Most of the staff was from Grumman. They were a particularly rough, “New Yorky” bunch.

We had a severe downsizing when Kirk was appointed as the President over the Bendix and Garrett Presidents, to offset the anticipated growth of Kirk’s staff. Joe McCormack was one of those senior managers who were severed.

### **17.3 MY NEW BOSS: NICK CAMERON JAN 1957**

Nick Cameron replaced McCormack. Cameron came from Morristown with the hope of becoming an operating officer in the combined aerospace company. He may have been the smartest person I knew in Allied. His promising career in Morristown was cut short when he made the mistake of telling Ed Hennessey that the merger with Signal was a mistake. For speaking his mind, Hennessey sent Cameron into exile with us.

### **17.4 ALLIEDSIGNAL AEROSPACE IN ARLINGTON, VA**

Kirk’s new staff had a strong bias against the types of businesses that they found in Bendix and Garrett Aerospace. They considered these businesses to be “commodity hardware businesses.” They wanted to add a “systems business” that would help customers explore advanced systems concepts. While some of Kirk’s staff worked on the reorganization of the existing businesses, others worked toward acquiring a systems organization.

There were only a few of us in the headquarters who could discuss the broad range of the company’s technologies. We catered to Kirk’s staff, as difficult as they made it, for personal survival. They were our new bosses.

The systems advocates identified a small “systems” company, Systems Planning Corporation (SPC), that was up for sale and cheap enough, they thought, to acquire. It was located just up Wilson Boulevard, two blocks from the USA Today Building. They invited me to join the group on its exploratory, “due diligence”, visit. Instead of any detailed discussion, our conversations were limited to generalities because the details of their business were in classified reports that were stored in the “vault.” Of the Allied people present, I was the only one with an active security clearance high enough to see the classified documents. So I was assigned to spend a day in their vault reading the classified reports and afterward to produce a sanitized opinion that would represent the group’s preliminary “due diligence” for the acquisition of SPC.

The acquisition of SPC required \$15 million that Kirk needed to get from Ed Hennessey. Kirk’s people developed a briefing, supported by my report, that Kirk took to Ed Hennessey. No one really knows what Kirk said at that meeting. Whatever he said, Hennessey fired him during that meeting. Additionally, Hennessey appointed the President of Garrett Aerospace to replace Kirk. Now everything was changed. The headquarters would move to Los Angeles. The Arlington office would be closed.



## **17.5 THE END OF THE ARLINGTON HEADQUARTERS, AND MY JOB DECEMBER 1987**

Layoff letters went out to the Arlington staff on December 16, 1987, effective at the end of January 1988. Very few Bendix people were offered jobs in Los Angeles. The Garrett management seemed intent on purging all of Bill Purple's people. Only a skeleton staff would remain in Arlington for the next six months.

I received my layoff letter on December 16. However, I was asked to stay on the skeleton staff until June 30, 1988. My incentive to defer looking for a job was a "stay on bonus" of almost 30% of my base salary. At the end of the period I was entitled to severance pay and outplacement assistance.

The skeleton staff, about eight of us, moved to the still unfinished floor that had been rented for Bob Kirk. Nick Cameron stayed with us until he began a new job in the Chemical Sector. This job was well below his Senior Vice President rank. It was clearly made up for him by his friends in Morristown.

December 1987- **Steve** graduated from the University of Maryland in December 1987. He immediately began working full time for Capital Camps.

## **17.6 LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB DECEMBER 1988**

I started looking for a job even before I got my layoff notice. One of my options was to go back into the Government. Since I was a former member of the Senior Executive Service, and thus could be readily placed in the Government, that was where I started to look.

A senior manager in the Department of Defense had two openings that he wanted me to consider. One opening was on his own staff. The other was as Director of DARPA. His own staff opening was firm. The DARPA job had been offered to someone who was wavering. He wanted me to be the backup candidate. I wasn't happy about going back into the Government for a couple of reasons. First, it seemed like a backward move professionally. I had already done all of those jobs. Second, the pay was much lower than my compensation in Allied. Bill Purple suggested that I send a resume to Martin Marietta in Bethesda, which I did, but their openings were in Orlando, Florida.

I was now 55 years old. I had seven years of service with Allied. I had withdrawn all of my pension contributions in the government retirement plan, so my entire pension potential was in the Allied plan where my pension was calculated by the number of years of service multiplied by my final salary. My pension situation would be more secure if I could find any way to stay with Allied for a few more years rather than going back into the government.

I proposed to Lance Davis, the director of the Allied Corporate laboratory in Morristown, who I had worked closely with for several years, that I work for him as a liaison between the laboratory and the business units. I had been doing this work while managing the programs from the headquarters and felt that I had the connections both in the laboratory and the businesses to make this work. I had one condition, however. I had to do this work from Washington, and didn't have to move to New Jersey.

Almost by return mail, Jim Colby, the Corporate Senior Vice President for Technology, and Davis' boss, offered me a job reporting to him and allowing me to work from Washington, DC. I had no



idea from where in Washington I would work. I felt that three more years of service would give me the nucleus of a pension. Then I could, as a fall back, look for a government job.

I was the only one of the Arlington Bendix Aerospace staff to find a way to stay with the company and remain in Arlington. Many people, including Bill Purple, were surprised that I managed to do so. I breathed a sigh of relief.

#### **17.7 WORK ON THE SKELETON STAFF JAN-JUNE 1988**

My assignment during this period was to help sell two Bendix Aerospace businesses that the Garrett management didn't want to retain. Specifically, I managed the interface with customers who came to perform their "due diligence" reviews of the businesses. This required me to set up facilities where customers could review the financial records, contracts, and human resource files of the divisions for sale. I was also responsible for providing any other information that was not in the files.

I rented two suites of rooms on different floors of the Best Western Hotel near Key Bridge. With the help of two secretaries and a moving company we moved all of the relevant files into these suites.

The customers arrived in the persons of CEOs, investment bankers, venture capitalists, and lawyers representing anonymous investors. They came supported by teams of accountants, contract lawyers and human resource actuaries. The accountants tried to reconcile the profitability that our brokers in New York had claimed. The contract lawyers tried to assess the remaining value of the contracts and see if the contracts could be transferred (novated) to them. The human resource actuaries were interested in the medical payments burden of the business' employees and retirees. I learned that Allied had sold off a number of businesses but kept the retirees as its own burden. Now these businesses were burdened by an overly large "retiree tail." Dealing with all of these people was quite an experience.

We managed to sell both businesses, but one sale fell through later. This was the sale of a business that made sonar equipment for the US Navy to a French customer. The US Navy would not agree to transfer the Sonar contracts and technology to a French company. Allied had to keep the business until it found an American customer.

#### **17.8 REPORTING TO WORK FOR JIM COLBY, JULY 1988**

I had known and worked with Jim Colby ever since I was told to "keep Morristown happy" in 1983. Now I looked forward to being on his staff. But that never happened.

Effective June 30, the day before I reported to work for him, Jim Colby was fired



## **18 ALLIEDSIGNAL CORPORATE TECHNOLOGY JULY 1988**

### **18.1 MY NEW BOSS: MARY GOOD**

The merger of Allied with Signal required the merger of the two corporate technology functions. Allied and Signal each had a Vice President for Technology. Hennessy had to let one of them go.

Mary Good was Signal's Vice-President for Technology. She was a feisty former chemistry professor at an obscure Louisiana College who had launched herself into the first wave of women on the national scene, not as a contributing scientist, but as an outspoken committee person.

Ed Hennessy found it more politically correct to fire Jim Colby, the Allied Vice President, than to fire Mary Good. By the time I reported to Morristown in July, Colby was gone. My boss was Mary Good. She had a different job for me than the one I had negotiated with Jim Colby.

I didn't know that Mary had served on the review panel for the Chemistry Directorate at AFOSR when I was director. She therefore knew of me. But I barely knew her. She knew my background in government R&D and she wanted me to take over the government contracting functions for both the Morristown Laboratory and the Signal Laboratory in Des Plaines, Ill. She agreed that I could stay in Washington to do this job, since that was where the funding agencies were.

### **18.2 SELLING RESEARCH**

I now had to oversee two marketing and contracting staffs, one at the corporate laboratory in Morristown, NJ and the other at the laboratory in Des Plaines, Ill, near O'Hare Airport. I decided to have two offices. One with the Morristown staff and another in Washington co-located with the Aerospace marketing staff in a building near the twin towers on Wilson Boulevard in Arlington.

My relationship with the Aerospace marketing staff began very unpleasantly. They wanted to represent the whole corporation in Washington and resented my independent presence. This issue only became resolved when they saw that I had no interest in taking government program managers out to lunch or schmoozing them in the evenings. My interest was only in developing winning proposals. So I let them be the "door opener" for me when I needed to see a program manager. They could come to the meeting, but it was clearly my meeting. And they saw that no one from the corporate laboratory would come to Washington without my prior review and approval.

We were all forced to move from Arlington to the corporate offices on Pennsylvania Avenue after about a year in Arlington. There my office was located among the corporate lobbyists. This was a far more pleasant arrangement for me, without changing the way I used the Aerospace marketing people. This building was next to the FBI building. My window looked out onto Pennsylvania Avenue. I was able to see a variety of orderly protest marches on Pennsylvania Avenue, under the supervision of the DC police, with minimum impact on traffic flow.

I began to commute to Morristown on Wednesday and back to Washington on Thursday. Typically I caught the 7 am flight from National Airport to Newark, and the 4 pm return flight on Thursday.

I thought that someone would catch on to the high cost of my commuting, including hotels, car rentals, and meals, but no one seemed to object.



This was my first experience having to sell research programs. I thought that I would dread selling, but I came to enjoy the challenge. I had always been the sponsor, or the buyer of the projects. Having been the buyer, I had a good idea about what constituted good and poor proposals.

The Allied proposals needed a lot of improvement. They didn't emphasize "outcomes." The scientists preferred to think of their research as "exploratory activity," and were noncommittal about the outcome. I knew that the best proposals started with some objective outcome and then structured the research to achieve the outcome. Most of the researchers were chemists who found that writing output-oriented proposals was very painful. I had to invest a lot of effort, and a lot of red markup ink, teaching them to write respectable proposals. My efforts paid off when we began to win contracts that were much larger than they had ever won before.

June 1989- **Saul** received his PhD from Carnegie Mellon in June 1989. He took a job with IBM Research in Haifa. He and Beri moved to Israel in September 1989. Ayelet was born in May 1990.

### 18.3 VALUING RESEARCH PROJECTS

Mary Good's boss had asked her if she had any way of knowing the value of the research projects in the laboratories. She tasked me to find the answer to his question as an annual objective. When my literature search provided little insight I read textbooks on finance and business evaluation. I soon developed a methodology for valuing research projects. Then I applied the methodology to the major projects in the laboratories. I found that very few of the projects had values that exceeded their costs. I was able to show that some of Mary Good's pet projects were quite worthless under the best of assumptions. She was not happy with this result. But there it was. She chose to ignore my findings.

This work changed my view of research spending and gave me insight into stock market investing. After I had evaluated the research projects, I saw that similar techniques had been used to evaluate stocks and businesses. This led me to some successful stock investing.

March 1990- **Bernie** was admitted to the Hospital for Joint Diseases (Beth Israel) in Manhattan in March 1991. For the next six months I visited him on the Thursday afternoon after I left Morristown. Instead of going directly to Newark Airport, I went into the city and parked near the hospital. I have told about his illness and his death in September 1991 elsewhere. (See Section 9, page 134, and Part I, Archive C.)

One of my early challenges was getting us out of a contract commitment that I had inherited. The laboratory had contracted to build a special high-power laser for the British Nuclear Establishment. The Brits had been paying for the work on a preset schedule and had paid for the components to build the laser system. We had accepted their funds and, having given up on building their system, had cannibalized the parts for other projects and had about \$300,000 of their money left over. Our controller had told Mary Good that Allied might have some major liability for the nonperformance if it caused collateral losses to the Brits. Mary was sufficiently concerned to report this to her boss, the president of Allied, who was also concerned. Although the agreement was made before either Mary or I were responsible, I told Mary I would try to negotiate an amicable contract termination. I knew I would need the help of a corporate lawyer and asked her for her preference. She recommended Martin Feinstein.



Feinstein and I arrived at London Heathrow at about 7 am, local time, drove out to the Nuclear Establishment and started our meeting with about five Brits at about 1 pm.

I fenced with them for about two hours, trying to figure out what their situation was and whether there really was any collateral risk. We mostly talked about their research and how they used lasers. I concluded that their funding of the laser was purely for research and not for any specific application. They never admitted, but I recognized, that their immediate concern was their own funding situation and they would be very happy just to get back the unspent cash that we were holding. They had forgotten that they owned the components that had been bought for the project, but I wanted any agreement to somehow also cover the components that had already been cannibalized. At about 4 pm I proposed an agreement by which we would return the unspent cash to them and give them the option to request return of the hardware for a one-year period. They didn't object to the proposal, but recommended that we meet the next day to discuss it again. Clearly they agreed, but they had to consult with their management. As we drove to the hotel, Marty Feinstein asked me if I heard what he had heard, that they agreed with my proposal. He was amazed that I had made it look so easy. I told him it was easy for me because I understood the research mentality.

We met again the next morning. Marty Feinstein wrote out a draft of the agreement. They had it typed. I signed it for Allied, and we were off. I called Mary Good from Heathrow. She was elated.

May 1991- **Alan** and Sandy were married in May 1991.

August 1992-**Nadav** was born in August 1992.

October 1992- The AlliedSignal Chairman, Ed Hennessy, was about a year away from retirement. The Board, in anticipation, identified Larry Bossidy, the Vice Chairman of GE as his successor. But Bossidy wouldn't accept being Hennessy's assistant for a year. So the Board dumped Ed Hennessy.

Larry Bossidy immediately announced that he intended to eliminate many levels of management. Mary Good had to review all of her senior staff reports, including me, with Bossidy. Here my GE credentials must have held me in good stead. The cuts came some time later. I lost a couple of people, but survived.

#### **18.4 MY NEW BOSS: ITZIK BARPAL -1993**

Mary Good left Allied Signal in 1993 to become an Assistant Secretary in the Commerce Department. She wanted that job to cap her career, but she also needed it because Bossidy wanted her to go. Itzik Barpal, formerly the Vice President of Technology at Westinghouse, replaced her.

Barpal was a native Argentinean Jew who spent time in Israel before coming to the US. His obscure background made him somewhat of a mystery. He resented people calling him Isaac or Yitzhak, thinking Itzik hid his Jewish origins. He was loud and boisterous and not very much interested in the science efforts of the laboratories. He said that he didn't come to AlliedSignal to "baby-sit" the laboratories. He left me alone to do my work so long as we were winning contracts.

October 1994- **Meryl** was born in October 1994 at Shady Grove Hospital.

Barpal, as the Corporate level Technology chief, saw his function as the coordinator of the sector



vice presidents of technology, although these vice presidents didn't need or want any coordination. One of these vice presidents saw me at one of Barpal's conferences and suggested that I should get a medal as the person from Bendix headquarters that had survived the longest in AlliedSignal.

June 1995- **Steve** and Esther were married in June 1995 at Beth El Congregation.

February 1996- Bossidy fired Barpal by eliminating his job. The Corporate Technology function was then downsized and moved to the Materials Sector. Many people received nice severance packages during this downsizing. I thought that perhaps this was my time to exit. I asked one of the operating vice presidents who was involved in the downsizing to consider me a candidate for a severance package. He refused, saying I was too valuable.

### **18.5 MY NEW BOSS: BARRY SIADAT –MARCH 1996**

My new boss was Barry Siadat, the newly hired Vice President of the Materials Sector. He also left me alone to do my job. But the sources of contract research funding in the government were drying up. There were no programs suitable for the lab to compete for. I mentioned this to Siadat in the context that I might be helpful to him in other ways since the contracting business was "slow." This led him to ask me about my plans for retirement. I told him that I needed to work until I was 65 so that I would have fifteen years of service and be entitled to a full retirement. He responded by offering me a chance to "retire whole" a year beforehand. He then instructed his Human Resource director to draft a severance package for me.

### **18.6 RETIREMENT- JULY 1, 1996**

The severance package that I negotiated allowed me to retire with 15 years of service at the age of 65, which was the requirement for a full retirement benefit. My day-to-day work obligation ended at the end of June 1996, but I was required to provide up to 30 days consulting for Siadat during the 1996-1997 year. I was happy with this arrangement.

This brought my working career to an end. I was 64 years old and in good health.

## **19 LIFE IN RETIREMENT**

The Legg Mason tennis tournament was scheduled in Washington for the first week of my retirement, the July 4<sup>th</sup> week. I bought a ticket at Giant and went to see it. I felt strange, like I was floating on air. The absence of any pressure to be anywhere, call anyone, made me feel guilty. This guilty feeling stayed with me for a few weeks until my birthday.

For my birthday, Alan gave me a set of golf clubs and a challenge to learn how to play so that I wouldn't embarrass him when we played on Wednesday afternoons. His gift channeled my lack of purpose into golf paranoia. I thought that golf would be easy to learn. It wasn't. I also had some obligations to fulfill.

I had agreed to be a consultant to the National Research Council on a panel assigned to assess the NIST programs in materials science. My specific assignment was to assess the group at the Boulder Laboratory in Boulder Colorado. Rather than becoming a thorn in their side, I decided to help them



survive through “constructive” (probably painful) criticism, although my criticism never found its way into the reports that I submitted.

I had also agreed to serve on an evaluation panel for NIST’s Advanced Technology Program, a contract research program that was funded from NIST. They asked me to scrub the candidate programs before they publicly requested proposals. The ATP program had been under fire by congressmen who didn’t believe that the government should fund commercial research. I did my best to help them survive. I told them that most of their proposals couldn’t be defended against the critiques of the congressmen. (I had testified before these congressmen. I knew their views firsthand.) I wrote detailed critiques that I am sure were unhappily received and probably ignored. Too bad. The program didn’t survive. Congress cut the funding for ATP.

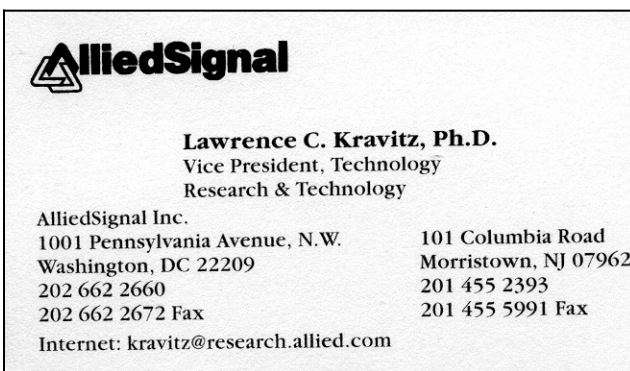
Lance Davis had taken a staff job in the Defense Department like the one I considered in 1987. He asked me to serve as a DoD consultant in reviewing Manufacturing Technology programs of the Services. I had two more years of obligation in this activity. These reviews were, to quote Yogi Berra, like “deja veau all over again.” The same outlandish claims by government program managers.

Several businesses asked me to help them sharpen up their government proposals. I charged them \$1500 per day, so long as I could work from home.

The evaluation panel work proved to be very unsatisfying. I found the same reasons for criticism that I had when I first went to work for AFOSR. The briefings seemed to be more and more alike and less interesting. I came to appreciate the maxim that “the more things change the more they stay the same.” I was glad when I could gracefully exit from these evaluation activities.

Summer 1996- **Benjamin (2) and Daniel (9 mos.)** arrived in the summer of 1996.

October 1996- Ken Machacek, the controller for the research activities under Barry Siadat asked me to come to Morristown for a day of consultation, supposedly to review the ongoing contracts. We set the date for October 16. I arrived at the usual time. After we had talked about the contracts, he told me that some other people wanted to see me. They were meeting in one of the executive dining rooms. The first person I saw when we opened the door to the executive dining room area was Benjamin. He let out a shriek when he saw me. Then I saw Meryl and Marge. Alan and Steve were there, along with many friends from Allied. I was totally surprised. I had no idea this was in the planning. There were many speeches and gifts. It was a great occasion.



My former self



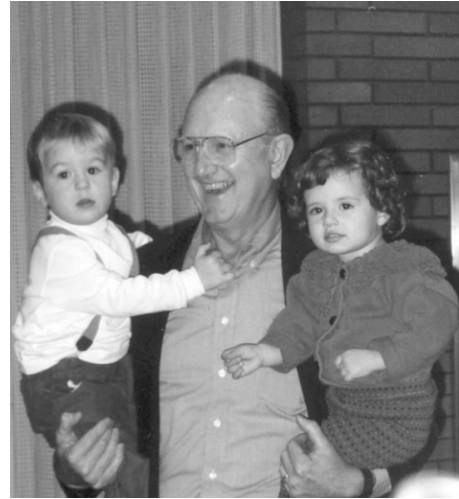




**Walking into the trap.**



**Surprise!!!**



**With Ben and Meryl**



**The family.**

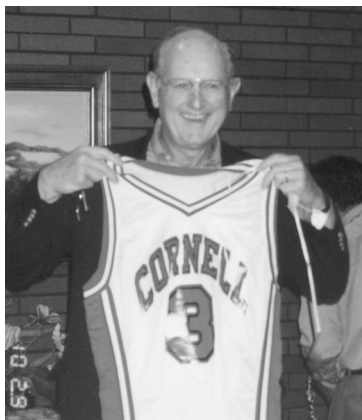


**Roasts: Nick  
DeChristofaro**



**Alan**

Marge and I began to take Ben and Meryl out for one day each week starting in the fall of 1996,



**My Cornell number.**



**Ken Machacek presents a mock  
racquet.**



**Responding to the roasts.**



when they were just barely past 2 years of age. The next year we added Danny when he turned 2. This was great fun. We kept this up for three years.

My work schedule had always taken me away from home during the week. Evening classes and volunteer work were therefore impossible. Retirement allowed me to catch up on courses I had always wanted to take. I began courses in Personal Computer assembly at Montgomery Community College, Videography at the local cable TV station, and Hebrew Ulpan at the JCC. I also volunteered to tutor students in math and physics at the JDS and started a physical fitness routine at the JCC.

I learned to build my own computer from purchased components. My computer worked as designed, but would have cost less if I ordered it built by a dealer to my specifications. The individually purchased components were marked up over the dealer's prices.

I learned videography and earned certificates to be a cameraman or an editor for the community television broadcast programs at the station. My interest was limited, however, to producing edited videos of the family. I installed a video editing facility at home. Many edited videotapes were produced from this equipment.

My Hebrew studies continued until my heart surgery. By then we were into the future tense, and I had a sizable vocabulary. I plan to go back to this one day.

Taking the courses, volunteering, taking Ben, Meryl, and learning golf more than filled my time.

## **19.1 THE FAMILY EXPANDS**

**Evan** was born in July 1997.

**Saul** and **Beri** returned in the summer of 1997. **Ayelet** and **Nadav** started at JDS in September 1997.

**Talya and Elana** were born in October 1997

**Natalie** was born in May 1999.

Starting in 2000, when Ben, Danny, and Meryl were in all-day programs, we took Evan, Talya and Elana for a day each week until they began all-day kindergarten in 2002.

## **19.2 MY HEART OPERATION –SEPTEMBER 2000**

I began to feel a shortening of my aerobic capacity when I climbed Mt Sinai in March of 2000. I was far more winded than any of the others. I felt no other symptoms at ground level or in normal activity. In September of 2000 we took a trip to Turkey. During that trip I began to feel what I thought was indigestion induced by exertion. I tried to test this hypothesis in the fitness center of the Istanbul Hilton. I found that my ability to ride an exercise bike was limited by both my aerobic capacity and the feeling of indigestion. A Turkish dish called Cacik, a cucumber, garlic and yogurt salad, seemed to provide relief. I concluded that the problem was indigestion.

We came home from Turkey on a Friday night. I immediately looked in our medical encyclopedia to see if I could find a description of my problem. I decided that I probably had a hiatus hernia. Angina was too remote a possibility. I planned to wait until Monday and see my doctor about the hiatus hernia.



Alan called the next day to hear about the trip. I told him about the symptoms and my diagnosis. He insisted that I had it wrong. I needed to first eliminate the possibility of angina. He insisted that I immediately go to the Suburban Hospital Emergency Room. The Emergency Room physician ordered all of the required tests to confirm Angina, and then concluded that I had no detectable problem. The cardiologist that we called suggested a follow up stress test.

Alan insisted that they omit the stress test and proceed to an angiogram. He suspected angina from the family history. Sure enough, the angiogram showed that several arteries were in various stages of becoming blocked. I needed to have a quadruple bypass surgery. Alan insisted that they get Dr Garcia, at the Washington Hospital Center, as my surgeon. I didn't know about Alan's negotiations. Garcia was the dean of the cardiac surgeons in Washington and usually difficult to schedule. Dr Garcia was available for me, however.

He met me in the corridor before I went into surgery. I was strapped to the gurney. He told me that they would have to remove veins from my left forearm and my leg, and that he didn't expect to use the heart-lung machine, but would do the bypasses on the "beating heart". Somewhat in jest I asked him whether my golf swing would be impacted by the loss of a forearm vein. He responded, "Oh, you are a golfer? Then we'll take them all from your legs."

My recovery was relatively rapid. No heart damage was discernible. No follow up medication was prescribed. As of this writing I am fully fit, playing golf, going to the fitness center, and fully enjoying retirement in the midst of a great family.



## The Family in 2002

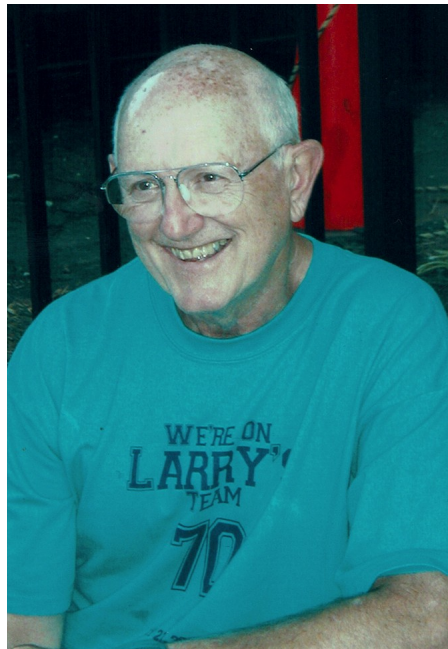


**This photo was taken at my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party, held at the Potomac Woods Swim Club. The shirts were designed by Beri. They say “We’re on Larry’s Team.”**

**Seated, Left to Right: Beri, Sandy, Natalie(lap), Nadav, Benjamin, Ayelet**

**Standing on bench: Meryl, Evan, Elana, Daniel, Talya**

**Standing, rear: Esther, Steve, me, Marge, Alan, Saul**





## The Family in 2022



**This photo was taken at my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party, held at Alan's house.  
Front, Left to Right: Elana, Talya, Natalie, Marge, me, Meryl, Beri, Ayelet, Maxim  
Back, Left to Right: Viktoria, Esther, Steve, David, Gail, Vivian, Sarah, Alan, Nadav,  
Howard, Eileen, Evan, David, Jamie, Saul, Yevgeny**



# Family Memorial Archives

## A. INDIVIDUAL RECORDS

These archives contain copies of family papers and some letters that require broader distribution than my own life story.

### I. Gravesites and their Perpetual Care Certificates

These papers relate to the gravesites of my parents and brothers Bernie and Joe. All of these graves have been endowed for perpetual care. That means that the cemetery operator has been paid to provide care in perpetuity. The care includes replacing the taxus evergreens when they die, and trimming the evergreens when they obscure the letters on the stones. Members of the family should use these documents as their license, when they visit the cemetery, to demand that the operator maintain the graves in accord with the contract.

### II Death and Birth Certificates

I have included any information I could add about the causes of death and health problems. This information may be useful for descendants who are interested in "medical family trees."

### III Eulogies and Memorial Letters

The eulogies for Bernie and Joe are my way of remembering them. Similarly, the two letters about my sister Martha and her husband Rabbi Meir Ostrinsky are my way of remembering their contributions to my family and me.

## B. DESCENDENCY CHARTS

All of the known descendants of the **Rissin** and **Kravtsov** families are charted with their available personal data.

## C. HEBREW NAME ORIGINS

Family members are associated with the ancestors whose Hebrew names they bear.



## A.1.1 My parents' graves and their Perpetual Care Certificate

# FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY BETH EL CEMETERY


P.O. Box 329

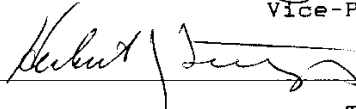
Westwood, New Jersey 07675

**FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY (BETH EL CEMETERY)**, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of New Jersey, hereby acknowledges the receipt of the sum indicated below which it agrees to take, hold, in perpetuity and invest and reinvest, together with, and as part of its special fund maintained for the perpetual care of lots, plots and graves in **Fidelity Cemetery Association of Bergen County, N.J. (Beth El Cemetery)**, situated in the Township of Washington, County of Bergen and State of New Jersey, pursuant to 8A:4-7 ET SEQ. of the Revised Statutes of the State of New Jersey as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended, in such securities as are permitted by law for the investment of such funds, and to apply the income derived therefrom to and for the perpetual care of the grave(s), lot or plot shown below according to a certain map on file in the office of the cemetery, and agrees perpetually to care for such grave(s), lot or plot to the extent that the income derived from such amount will permit, as provided in 8A:4-7 ET SEQ. of the aforesaid Revised Statutes of the State of New Jersey, as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the said **Fidelity Cemetery Association of Bergen County, N.J. (Beth El Cemetery)** has caused this Trust Fund Receipt to be signed by its duly authorized officers and its corporate seal affixed on 02/01/91

**FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY,  
NEW JERSEY (BETH EL CEMETERY)**

  
Vice-President

  
Treasurer

STATE OF NEW JERSEY )  
COUNTY OF BERGEN ) SS.:

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on 02/01/91 before me, the subscriber, a Notary Public of the State of New Jersey, personally appeared Herbert B. Klanner, the Vice-President of **FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY, NJ (BETH EL CEMETERY)**, who, I am satisfied, is the person who has signed the within instrument, and thereupon he acknowledged that he signed, sealed with the corporate seal and delivered the said instrument as such officer aforesaid; that the within instrument is the voluntary act and deed of said corporation, made by virtue of authority from its Board of Trustees.

  
A Notary Public of the State of New Jersey

Trust Fund Receipt #: 00004419-8

NOTARY PUBLIC OF NEW JERSEY  
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES  
SEPTEMBER 28, 1992

Amount Received: \$ 1,800.00 ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED and 00/100

Received From: MRS B SPIELMAN  
1125 DOUGHTY BLVD  
LAWRENCE NY 11559

For: KRAWITZ EMMA-HARRY  
Block: 4 Section: 4 Lot: Line: 8 Grave: 35-36  
UNITED HEBREW

Other Provisions (if any):



## A.1.2 The Deed to My Mother's Grave

Tel. ORchard 4-3580 No. 1666

**UNITED HEBREW COMMUNITY OF NEW YORK, Inc.**  
201 EAST BROADWAY  
NEW YORK 2, N. Y.

**D E E D**

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT Mr. EMMA KROWETZ  
residing at 874 Manida St. Bronx 59 NY  
has paid the sum of Seventy-five -----Dollars  
(\$ 75.00 ) in full for one adult grave in the BETH EL Cemetery  
located at Paramus, N.J., said grave being known  
as Block No. \_\_\_\_\_ Section No. 4 Line No. 8  
Grave No. 35 as shown on the Map of the said Beth El Cemetery  
or on the Map of the United Hebrew Community of New York which is on file at the office of said  
Beth El Cemetery.  
It is understood that this grave ~~xxx~~ is to be used for the interment of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
EMMA KROWETZ  
\_\_\_\_\_  
and not otherwise and that said grave cannot be transferred without the written consent of the  
United Hebrew Community of New York, Inc., first had and obtained.  
It is further understood and agreed that interment in said grave shall be according to  
all the rules and customs of the Orthodox Jewish Faith.  
This grave ~~xxxx~~ is sold subject in all respects to the rules and regulations as laid  
down by the United Hebrew Community of New York, Inc., and of the Beth El  
Cemetery, and the purchaser purchases this grave with the full knowledge thereof.  
No interment in this grave herein sold shall be had unless a permit for the inter-  
ment is first procured from the United Hebrew Community of New York, Inc.  
It is further understood that at the time of the procuring of said permit, this instrument  
shall be delivered to the United Hebrew Community of New York, Inc., for cancellation.  
It is further understood that the purchase price of this grave sold ~~does~~ does not in-  
clude payment for funeral services. These funeral services can be only had if the purchaser had  
originally fully paid for such service or is a member of the United Hebrew Community of New York,  
Inc., in good standing at the time of procuring of the interment permit.  
Dated, New York, July 27, 19 53  
Reserved 9-20-44  
Seal  
UNITED HEBREW COMMUNITY OF NEW YORK, INC.  
Harry Rayoain  
Authorized Signature  
Sapirstein  
Authorized Signature



## A.1.3 The Certificate of Mama's Death

PERSONAL PARTICULARS (To be filled in by Funeral Director)		MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH (To be filled in by the Physician)	
1. NAME OF DECEASED (Print or Type name) <b>Rosa Kravits</b>		Certificate No. <b>153-59-48391</b>	
2 USUAL RESIDENCE: (a) State <b>New York</b> (b) Co. <b>Queens</b> (c) Post Office and Zone <b>Far Rockaway</b> (d) No. <b>834 Far Rockaway Blvd.</b> Ave. <b>St.</b> (e) Length of residence or stay in (City of New York immediately prior to death) <b>45 Years</b>		15 PLACE OF DEATH: (a) NEW YORK CITY: (b) Borough <b>Queens</b> (c) Name of Hospital or Institution <b>St. Joseph's Hospital</b> (d) If in hospital, give Ward No. <b>F.W. Cu 13</b>	
3 MARRIAGE: MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED (write the word) <b>Widowed</b>		16 DATE AND HOUR OF DEATH Month <b>July</b> Day <b>25</b> Year <b>1959</b> Hour <b>11:00 P.</b>	
4 DATE OF BIRTH OF DECEDENT (Month) (Day) (Year)		17 SEX <b>Female</b> 18 COLOR OR RACE <b>White</b> 19 Approximate Age <b>68</b>	
5 AGE <b>71</b> yrs. If under 1 year, give month and day. If less than 1 day, give hour and minute.		20 I HEREBY CERTIFY that <del>(insert name of physician)</del> (a staff physician of this institution attended the deceased)*	
6 Usual Occupation (Kind of work done during most of working life, even if retired) <b>Housewife</b> b. Kind of Business or Industry in which this work was done <b>Own Home</b>		from <b>July 25, 1959</b> to <b>July 25, 1959</b> and last saw her alive at <b>11:00 P.M.</b> on <b>July 25, 1959</b>	
7 SOCIAL SECURITY NO. <b>092-14-9653</b>		I further certify that death <del>was not</del> caused, directly or indirectly by accident, homicide, suicide, acute or chronic poisoning, or in any suspicious or unusual manner, and that it was due to <b>NATURAL CAUSES</b> more fully described in the confidential medical report filed with the Department of Health.	
8 BIRTHPLACE (State or Foreign Country) <b>Russia</b>		* Cross out words that do not apply. † See first instruction on reverse of certificate.	
9 OF WHAT COUNTRY WAS DECEASED A CITIZEN AT TIME OF DEATH? <b>U.S.A.</b>		Witness my hand this <b>25</b> day of <b>July</b> , 19 <b>59</b> .	
10a. WAS DECEASED EVER IN UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES? <b>No</b> 10b. IF YES, Give war or date of service		Signature <b>Vincent Arguelles</b> D.O. <b>M.D.</b>	
11 NAME OF FATHER OF DECEDENT <b>Zvi Naftali Rosen</b>		Address <b>St. Joseph's Hospital, Far Rockaway New York</b>	
12 MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER OF DECEDENT <b>Becha Abramson</b>			
13 NAME OF INFORMANT <b>Joseph Kravit</b>		RELATIONSHIP TO DECEASED <b>Son</b> ADDRESS <b>311 East 72 Street, NYC</b>	
14a. Name of Cemetery or Crematory <b>Beth-El Cemetery</b>		14b. Location (City, Town or County and State) <b>Oradell, New Jersey</b> 14c. Date of Burial or Cremation <b>July 26, 1959</b>	
21 FUNERAL DIRECTOR <b>NISBERG MIDWOOD CHAPEL, INC.</b>		ADDRESS <b>1625 Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn, NY</b>	
BUREAU OF RECORDS AND STATISTICS		DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH THE CITY OF NEW YORK	

Joe provided the information shown on the form after her death. Some of the information on this form is, however, incorrect. The following corrections are inserted here just for Archival purposes. The address is not her own home, but the old Spielman apartment. Her father's name was Nechemia Zvi Ryssin. Mama's age was 69, plus or minus two years. Her mother's first name was Beyle. Her last name may have been Abramowitz. I am still trying to confirm this.

The cause of my mother's death is not shown. She had a blood condition known as polycythemia. She also suffered from pains in her legs that must have been "referred pains" from a degenerative disk in her spine. This seems to run in the family. I have it and Joe had it.

My father died on May 28, 1943. He had diabetes, as did his father and brothers, leading to circulatory problems in his legs. A toe infection became gangrenous because of the poor circulation. He died, at age 52, after an operation to amputate the toe.



## A.2.1 Joe's Grave and the Perpetual Care Certificate

### FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY BETH EL CEMETERY

P.O. Box 329

Westwood, New Jersey 07675

**FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY (BETH EL CEMETERY)**, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of New Jersey, hereby acknowledges the receipt of the sum indicated below which it agrees to take, hold, in perpetuity and invest and reinvest, together with, and as part of its special fund maintained for the perpetual care of lots, plots and graves in **Fidelity Cemetery Association of Bergen County, N.J. (Beth El Cemetery)**, situated in the Township of Washington, County of Bergen and State of New Jersey, pursuant to 8A:4-7 ET SEQ. of the Revised Statutes of the State of New Jersey as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended, in such securities as are permitted by law for the investment of such funds, and to apply the income derived therefrom to and for the perpetual care of the grave(s), lot or plot shown below according to a certain map on file in the office of the cemetery, and agrees perpetually to care for such grave(s), lot or plot to the extent that the income derived from such amount will permit, as provided in 8A:4-7 ET SEQ. of the aforesaid Revised Statutes of the State of New Jersey, as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the said **Fidelity Cemetery Association of Bergen County, N.J. (Beth El Cemetery)** has caused this Trust Fund Receipt to be signed by its duly authorized officers and its corporate seal affixed on 05/05/98

**FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY,  
NEW JERSEY (BETH EL CEMETERY)**

  
President

  
Treasurer

STATE OF NEW JERSEY )  
COUNTY OF BERGEN ) SS.:

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on 05/05/98 before me, the subscriber, a Notary Public of the State of New Jersey, personally appeared **Herbert B. Klapper** the President of **FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY, NJ (BETH EL CEMETERY)**, who, I am satisfied, is the person who has signed the within instrument, and thereupon he acknowledged that he signed, sealed with the corporate seal and delivered the said instrument as such officer aforesaid; that the within instrument is the voluntary act and deed of said corporation, made by virtue of authority from its Board of Trustees.

  
A Notary Public of the State of New Jersey

Trust Fund Receipt #: 00006878-3

Amount Received: \$ 1,300.00 ONE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED and 00/100

Received From: EST JOSEPH J KRAVIT  
LAWRENCE KRAVITZ  
7128 WOLFTREE LANE  
ROCKVILLE MD 20852

For: KRAVIT JOSEPH  
Block: 4  
UNITED HEBREW

Section: 4 Lot: Line: 1 Grave: 11

Other Provisions (if any):



# FAMILY MEMORIAL ARCHIVES

## A.2.2 Joe's Death Certificate

1186 LOCAL FILE NUMBER		146 STATE FILE NUMBER	
1 NAME <b>Joseph</b>		2 SEX (M / F) <b>Male</b>	
3 DEATH DATE (Mo, Day, Yr) <b>10/10/1997</b>			
4 AGE LAST BIRTHDAY (Yrs) <b>76</b>		5 UNDER 1 YEAR <b>MOS</b>	
6 UNDER 1 DAY <b>HOURS</b>		7 BIRTHDATE (Mo, Day, Yr) <b>01/28/1921</b>	
8 BIRTHPLACE (City, State or Foreign Country) <b>New York, NY</b>		9 WAS DECEDENT EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? (Yes / No) <b>No</b>	
10 COUNTY OF DEATH <b>Thurston</b>			
11 CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION OF DEATH <b>Olympia</b>		12 PLACE OF DEATH—SEE BOX FOR PLACE THEN GIVE ADDRESS OR INSTITUTION NAME <b>St. Peter Hospital</b>	
13 SMOKING IN LAST 15 YEARS? (Yes / No) <b>No</b>			
14 MARITAL STATUS—Married, Never Married, Widowed, Divorced (Specify) <b>Widowed</b>		15 SURVIVING SPOUSE (If wife, give maiden name) <b>-</b>	
16 SOCIAL SECURITY NO. <b>065-12-3004</b>		17 DECEDENT'S EDUCATION (Specify only highest grade completed) <b>12</b>	
18 USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life. DO NOT USE RETIRED) <b>Accountant</b>		19 KIND OF BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY <b>Accounting</b>	
20 Was Decedent of Hispanic origin or descent? (Ancestry) (Specify Yes or No. If Yes, specify Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc.) (Yes / No) Specify: <b>No</b>		21 RACE (Specify) <b>White</b>	
22 RESIDENCE—NUMBER AND STREET <b>5610 Cedar Flats Rd.</b>		23 CITY/TOWN OR LOCATION <b>Olympia</b>	
24 INSIDE CITY LIMITS? (Yes / No) <b>No</b>		25A COUNTY <b>Thurston</b>	
25B LENGTH OF RES. IN CO. <b>Unk</b>		26 STATE <b>WA</b>	
27 ZIP CODE <b>98512</b>			
28 FATHER'S NAME—FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST <b>Harry Krawitz</b>		29 MOTHER'S NAME—FIRST, MIDDLE, MAIDEN SURNAME <b>Emma Rosen</b>	
30 INFORMANT—NAME <b>Lawrence Kravitz (Son)</b>		31 MAILING ADDRESS—STREET OR RFD NO., CITY OR TOWN, STATE, ZIP <b>7128 WolfTree Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20852</b>	
32 BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL, OTHER (Specify) <b>Removal</b>		33 DATE (Mo, Day, Yr) <b>10/10/1997</b>	
34 CEMETERY/CREMATORY—NAME <b>Kehlia Chappels</b>		35 LOCATION—CITY/TOWN, STATE <b>Bronx, New York</b>	
36 FUNERAL DIRECTOR SIGNATURE <i>Teresa Goen</i>		37 NAME OF FACILITY <b>Gaffney, Cassidy-Allen &amp; Buckley-King Funeral Home, INC</b>	
38 ADDRESS OF FACILITY <b>Tacoma, WA 98405</b>			
TO BE COMPLETED ONLY BY CERTIFYING PHYSICIAN		TO BE COMPLETED ONLY BY MEDICAL EXAMINER OR CORONER	
39 TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, DEATH OCCURRED AT THE TIME, DATE AND PLACE AND WAS DUE TO THE CAUSE(S) STATED <b>X</b>		43 ON THE BASIS OF EXAMINATION AND/OR INVESTIGATION, IN MY OPINION DEATH OCCURRED AT THE TIME, DATE AND PLACE AND WAS DUE TO THE CAUSE(S) STATED <b>X</b>	
40 DATE SIGNED (Mo, Day, Yr) <b>10/10/1997</b>		41 HOUR OF DEATH (24 Hrs.) <b>0309</b>	
42 NAME AND TITLE OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN IF OTHER THAN CERTIFIER (Type or Print) <b>Ronald Quinton, MD 525-Lilly Rd. NE Ste#200, Olympia, WA 98506</b>		44 DATE SIGNED (Mo, Day, Yr)	
45 HOUR OF DEATH (24 Hrs.)		46 PRONOUNCED DEAD (Mo, Day, Yr)	
47 HOUR PRONOUNCED DEAD (24 Hrs.)		48 NAME AND ADDRESS OF CERTIFIER—PHYSICIAN, MEDICAL EXAMINER OR CORONER (Type or Print) <b>Ronald Quinton, MD 525-Lilly Rd. NE Ste#200, Olympia, WA 98506</b>	
49 ME/CORONER FILE NUMBER			
50 ENTER THE DISEASES, INJURIES, OR COMPLICATIONS WHICH CAUSED THE DEATH:			
IMMEDIATE CAUSE (Final disease or condition resulting in death) <b>A Ischemic Cardiomyopathy</b>		INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH <b>Indefinite</b>	
DO NOT ENTER THE MODE OF DYING, SUCH AS CARDIAC OR RESPIRATORY ARREST, SHOCK, OR HEART FAILURE. LIST ONLY ONE CAUSE ON EACH LINE. Sequentially list conditions, if any, leading to immediate cause. Enter UNDERLYING CAUSE (Disease or injury which initiated events resulting in death) LAST.		INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH <b>Indefinite</b>	
<b>B Coronary Artery Disease</b>		INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH	
<b>C</b>		INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH	
<b>D</b>		INTERVAL BETWEEN ONSET AND DEATH	
51 OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS—CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTING TO DEATH BUT NOT RESULTING IN THE UNDERLYING CAUSE GIVEN ABOVE <b>Aortic Valvular Stenosis</b>		52 AUTOPSY? (Yes / No) <b>No</b>	
53 WAS CASE REFERRED TO MEDICAL EXAMINER OR CORONER? (Yes / No) <b>NO</b>			
54 ACC. SUICIDE, HOM., UNDET., OR PENDING INVEST. (Specify)		55 INJURY DATE (Mo, Day, Yr)	
56 HOUR OF INJURY (24 Hrs.)		57 DESCRIBE HOW INJURY OCCURRED	
58 INJURY AT WORK? (Yes / No)		59 PLACE OF INJURY—AT HOME, FARM, STREET, FACTORY, OFFICE, BLDG. ETC. (Specify)	
60 LOCATION—STREET OR RFD NO., CITY/TOWN, STATE			
61 RECORD AMENDMENT (Registrar use only) ITEM DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE REVIEWED BY DATE		62 REGISTRAR SIGNATURE <i>Ronald Quinton</i>	
63 DATE RECEIVED (Mo, Day, Yr) <b>OCT 10 1997</b>			

FOR INSTRUCTIONS SEE BACK AND HANDBOOK

DOH 110-008 (Rev. 7/91) (formerly DSHS 9-150)

DOH 01-003 (8/96)

The certificate shows the immediate cause of death as heart disease. Joe was also a diabetic. He had circulation problems in his legs when he was in his thirties. In his last year, his legs were so ulcerated from lack of circulation that he faced the alternative of a leg bypass operation or amputation below the knee. The carotid artery feeding his brain was also blocked. Like our father, his diabetes, vascular problems, and heart disease were related. Like our mother, his back problem was probably a degenerated disk.



### A.2.3 My Eulogy at Joe's Burial

The circle of Joe's life is being completed today as we lay him to rest here in what has become a family burial ground.

Joe began life as the oldest son to a couple of Russian immigrants. Some of his earliest memories relate to being drafted at the age of eight to deliver meat to our father's butcher shop customers. By the time he was sixteen, our father was in the painting business, so he was again drafted to paint apartments. This imposed obligation to contribute to family economics was his burden as the oldest son. Joe told how both he and Bernie, who was only fourteen at the time, were sent to paint apartments. Bernie was a sickly kid who tired rapidly. To keep him going, Joe sang songs to Bernie. One that Joe recorded for Sue went like this: "Swing your brush my brother, swing a little further, and we'll soon be out of here."

These were the years of the Great Depression. Joe's reactions to the obligations and constraints imposed upon him are told by some of the stories I heard as a small child. How one time Joe almost ran away from home by getting work aboard a ship that was set to sail from a nearby pier. And how another time Joe disappeared to attend a scouting jamboree in Washington D.C., sending a letter when he needed money after a week had passed. Joe clearly had aspirations that couldn't be fulfilled within the confines of family businesses.

Then there were the other stories. How Joe was so good at working with his hands and at building things in our basement shop. And how Joe had a beautiful voice, and sang in the High School's glee club. How he was a talented graphic artist. His work had been published in the yearbook and Mama had saved all of it as a treasure. And how frustrated Mama was that Joe never fully exploited these talents.

As the war broke out and the draft loomed, Mama helped Joe find work at a farm in nearby Morristown, partly to get him away from the pressures of home and into the outdoor environment that he loved. For the next ten years, from the time I was eight years old, he was away from home working on farms and then going to college. ,

My earliest memories of Joe were seeing him with his scout troop camping out at the Croton Reservoir. After he left home I took possession of some camping equipment of the scout troop where he had been assistant scoutmaster. I took out the signal flags, the reflecting signal device, the pup tent, and the cooking kit, and I made believe I was on one of those glamorous camping trips with my big brother Joe.

It was Joe who paved the way for me to go to college outside of the city. Through Joe, I was able to visit Cornell and find my first living quarters. During my freshman year, when we both lived in Ithaca, I saw him more than ever before. It was only then that I began to develop a more mature understanding of Joe and his relationship to Mama and the family.



Joe liked to see himself as a free person, setting his own high standards, without externally imposed obligations, and unencumbered by ideas that other people, the family in particular, had for the way he should live or work. He achieved his sense of freedom by maintaining some distance, geographically or emotionally, from the family. In spite of this impulse for distance, he always felt inexorably bound to the family by some unshakeable gravitational force.

His happiest years were undoubtedly during his loving and devoted marriage to Betti. . When her cancer was detected, they traveled broadly to maximize their remaining time together. As the cancer advanced, he nursed her at home until the very end. He suffered greatly, and never fully recovered from her death. He was a devoted father to their children, refusing to let them go out from under his care while he worked to secure their financial security as a single father.

In later years he took the initiative to renew a close relationship with his daughter Susan. His decision to join her in Olympia, Washington, and the loving relationship they, developed, became a suitable capstone to his 78 year journey through life.

A few weeks ago, when he consented to an eventual burial here with the family, his life had come full circle. He had finally closed the distance he had always maintained between himself and his original family.

Joe died peacefully in his sleep two days after surgery. Before the surgery he told me that he made the decision to undergo surgery, knowing that death was a strong possibility. He was at peace with that decision. I believe that a key ingredient in that peace was his knowledge that, in the worst case, he would be finally, after many years, reunited with his parents here in this plot of ground.

Joe has had a long, difficult, and honorable journey through a life that has seen both a measure of joy and much sadness. May he now rest here in peace.

10/12/97 LCK

Note on Joe's burial: We buried Joe as a family, without any professional support beyond the cemetery workers. Steven had researched the ritual. Various members of the next generation read parts. This display of capability, continuity, independence, and unity made a big impression on me, as it would have greatly impressed Mama.



### A.3.1 My brother Bernie's grave



RG 8022 DEED NO. 5417

**UNITED HEBREW COMMUNITY OF NEW YORK**  
ADATH ISRAEL OF NEW YORK  
201 EAST BROADWAY  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10002  
24 HOUR TELEPHONE 212-674-3580

**DEED**

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT Mrs. BERTHA SPIELMAN  
residing at 1125 Doghty Boulevard Lawrence, New York 11559  
has paid the sum of Four Hundred Fifty and 00/100---- Dollars (\$ 450.00 )  
in full for .....one..... adult grave in the Beth El ..... Cemetery  
located at Paramus, New Jersey ..... said grave being known as  
Block/Section No. 4/3 ..... Pvt. Pl. No. NO ..... Row No. 3 ..... Grave No. 1 .....  
as shown on the Map of the said Beth El ..... Cemetery  
and on the Map of the United Hebrew Community of New York which is on file at the office of said  
Beth El ..... Cemetery.

It is understood that this grave is ~~this grave is~~ to be used for the interment of:

BERNARD KRAWITZ

and not otherwise and that said grave cannot be transferred without the written consent of the  
United Hebrew Community of New York, first had and obtained.

It is further understood and agreed that interment in said grave shall be according to the Laws and  
customs of the Orthodox Jewish Faith.

This grave is ~~This grave is~~ reserved, subject in all respects to the rules and regulations as laid  
down by the United Hebrew Community of New York, and of the Beth El .....  
Cemetery, and the purchaser reserves this grave ~~this grave~~ with the full knowledge thereof.

No interment in this grave ~~this grave~~ herein reserved shall be had unless a permit for the  
interment is first procured from the United Hebrew Community of New York.

It is further understood that the purchase price of this grave ~~this grave~~ reserved does  
not include funeral benefits. These benefits can be had only if the deceased is a member of the United  
Hebrew Community of New York, in good standing at the time of procuring the interment permit.

Dated, New York, Reserved May 29, 1991  
July 16, 1991

UNITED HEBREW COMMUNITY OF NEW YORK  
Adath Israel of New York

Approved by  
Authorized Signature  
Harold Weinberg



## A.3.2 Perpetual Care Certificate for Bernie's Grave

# FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY BETH EL CEMETERY

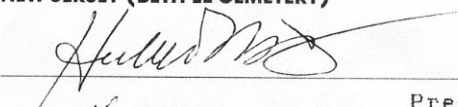
P.O. Box 329

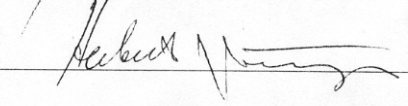
Westwood, New Jersey 07675

**FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY (BETH EL CEMETERY)**, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of New Jersey, hereby acknowledges the receipt of the sum indicated below which it agrees to take, hold, in perpetuity and invest and reinvest, together with, and as part of its special fund maintained for the perpetual care of lots, plots and graves in **Fidelity Cemetery Association of Bergen County, N.J. (Beth El Cemetery)**, situated in the Township of Washington, County of Bergen and State of New Jersey, pursuant to 8A:4-7 ET SEQ. of the Revised Statutes of the State of New Jersey as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended, in such securities as are permitted by law for the investment of such funds, and to apply the income derived therefrom to and for the perpetual care of the grave(s), lot or plot shown below according to a certain map on file in the office of the cemetery, and agrees perpetually to care for such grave(s), lot or plot to the extent that the income derived from such amount will permit, as provided in 8A:4-7 ET SEQ. of the aforesaid Revised Statutes of the State of New Jersey, as they now exist or as they may hereafter be amended.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the said **Fidelity Cemetery Association of Bergen County, N.J. (Beth El Cemetery)** has caused this Trust Fund Receipt to be signed by its duly authorized officers and its corporate seal affixed on 04/01/94

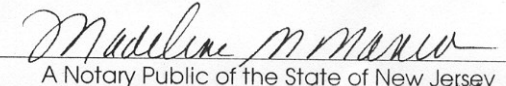
**FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY,  
NEW JERSEY (BETH EL CEMETERY)**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Treasurer

STATE OF NEW JERSEY }  
COUNTY OF BERGEN } SS.:

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on 04/01/94 before me, the subscriber, a Notary Public of the State of New Jersey, personally appeared **Herbert B. Klapper** the **President** of **FIDELITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF BERGEN COUNTY, NJ (BETH EL CEMETERY)**, who, I am satisfied, is the person who has signed the within instrument, and thereupon he acknowledged that he signed, sealed with the corporate seal and delivered the said instrument as such officer aforesaid; that the within instrument is the voluntary act and deed of said corporation, made by virtue of authority from its Board of Trustees.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
A Notary Public of the State of New Jersey  
NOTARY PUBLIC OF NEW JERSEY  
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES  
SEPTEMBER 28, 1997

Trust Fund Receipt #: 00005461-9 (FILE COPY)  
Amount Received: \$ 1,000.00 ONE THOUSAND and 00/100

Received From: MR LAWRENCE C KRAVITZ  
7128 WOLFTREE LANE  
ROCKVILLE MD 20852

For: KRAVITZ BERNARD  
Block: 4 Section: 3 Lot: Line: 3 Grave: 1  
UNITED HEBREW

Other Provisions (if any):



### A.3.3 Certificate of Bernie's Death

DATE FILED BUREAU OF VITAL RECORDS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN SEP 29 12 21 AM '91		CERTIFICATE OF DEATH Certificate No. 56-91 052644	
1. NAME OF DECEASED (Type or Print) (First Name) (Middle Name) (Last Name) Bernard Kravitz			
MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH (To be filled in by the Physician)			
2. PLACE OF DEATH 2a. BOROUGH Manhattan	2b. Name of hospital or other facility if not facility, street address Hospital for Special Diseases	2c. If in Hospital or Other Facility (Check) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> DOA 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Outpatient 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Emerg. 4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inpatient	2d. If inpatient, date of current admission Month Day Year 04 16 91
3a. Date and Hour (Month) of Death 09 28 91	3b. HOUR 7:55	4. SEX M	5. APPROXIMATE AGE 67
6. I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT: (Check One) <input type="checkbox"/> I attended the deceased <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A staff physician of this institution attended the deceased Dr. E. Fazzini J. Brady attended the deceased from 04/16/91 19 91 to 07/28 19 91 and last saw him alive at 7 <sup>th</sup> AM on 09/28 19 91. I further certify that traumatic injury or poisoning DID NOT play any part in causing death, and that death did not occur in any unusual manner and was due entirely to NATURAL CAUSES. Witness my hand this 28 <sup>th</sup> day of Sept 19 91 Signature Christopher C. Young D.O. Name of Physician (Type or Print) Address 301 E 77th Street NYC, NY.			
PERSONAL PARTICULARS (To be filled in by Funeral Director)			
7. Usual Residence a. State NY	7b. County QUEEN	7c. City, Town, or Location QUEENS NY	7d. Street & House No. 135 Beach 19 <sup>th</sup>
8. Served in U.S. Armed Forces No Yes Specify years 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> From To	9. Marital Status (Check One) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Never Married 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Married or separated 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	10. Name of Surviving Spouse (If wife, give maiden name)	
11. Date of birth of Decedent (Month) (Day) (Year) 5 25 1924	12. Age at last birthday 67	13. Social Security No.	
14a. Usual Occupation (Kind of work done during most of working lifetime, do not enter retired) OFFICE WORKER		14b. Kind of Business TRANSIT AUTH.	
15. Birthplace (City & State or Foreign Country) NY	16. Education (Check only one) 0-11 12 13-15 16 17+ 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	17. Other name(s) by which decedent was known BERNARD KRAWITZ	
18. NAME OF FATHER OF DECEDENT HARRY		19. MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER OF DECEDENT EMMA ROSEN	
20a. NAME OF INFORMANT BERTHA SPIELMAN	20b. RELATIONSHIP TO DECEASED SISTER	20c. ADDRESS (City) (State) (Zip) 1125 DAUGHTY BLVD GNS NY	
21a. NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY BETH EL	21b. LOCATION (City, Town, State and Country) WESTWOOD NJ	21c. DATE OF BURIAL OR CREMATION 9/29/91	
22a. FUNERAL DIRECTOR YABICKOFF KINSWAY MEMORIAL CHAPEL		22b. ADDRESS 1175 CONEY ISLAND AVE	
BUREAU OF VITAL RECORDS		DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH	
VR15 (1/88)		THE CITY OF NEW YORK	

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a record on file in the Department of Health. The Department of Health does not certify to the truth of the statements made thereon, as no inquiry as to the facts has been provided by law.

**DEATH TRANSCRIPT**

Earlene Price  
EARLENE PRICE  
CITY REGISTRAR

Do Not accept this transcript unless it bears the raised seal of the Department of Health. The reproduction or alteration of this transcript is prohibited by Section 3.21 of the New York City Health Code.

BUREAU OF VITAL RECORDS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DATE ISSUED  
VR140-150M-1500172

SEP 29 1991

DOCUMENT NO. B389754

Bernie had diabetes, which led to his heart disease. He also developed Parkinson's disease in his late fifties. At about age 64 he had cataracts removed.



## A.3.4 Bernie's Army Discharge Record

ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION HONORABLE DISCHARGE											
1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL <b>KRAWITZ BERNARD</b>			2. ARMY SERIAL NO. <b>32 995 680</b>		3. GRADE <b>PFC</b>		4. ARM OR SERVICE <b>AAA</b>		5. COMPONENT <b>AUS</b>		
6. ORGANIZATION <b>137TH AAA GUN BN BTRY B</b>			7. DATE OF SEPARATION <b>10 APR 46</b>		8. PLACE OF SEPARATION <b>SEP CTR FT DIX NJ</b>						
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES <b>874 MANIDA ST BX NY</b>					10. DATE OF BIRTH <b>26 MAY 24</b>		11. PLACE OF BIRTH <b>BX NY</b>				
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT <b>SEE 9</b>					13. COLOR EYES <b>BRN</b>		14. COLOR HAIR <b>BRN</b>		15. HEIGHT <b>5-8 1/2</b>		
					16. WEIGHT <b>165 LBS.</b>		17. NO. DEPEND. <b>2</b>				
18. RACE <b>WHITE</b>		19. MARITAL STATUS <b>SINGLE</b>		20. U.S. CITIZEN <b>YES</b>		21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. <b>STUDENT X-02</b>					
MILITARY HISTORY											
22. DATE OF INDUCTION <b>5 AUG 43</b>			23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT <b>26 AUG 43</b>			24. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE <b>NYC NY</b>			25. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>NYC NY</b>		
26. SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA <b>YES</b>		27. LOCAL S.S. BOARD NO. <b>78</b>		28. COUNTY AND STATE <b>BX CO NY</b>			29. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE <b>1174 BURNETH PL BX NY</b>				
30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. <b>CANNONEER 2601</b>					31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (i.e., infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) <b>M1 RIFLE MKM 153 15 NOV 43</b>						
32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS <b>SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES GO 33 WD 45 AS AMENDED</b>											
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS <b>AMERICAN CAMPAIGN MEDAL ASIATIC PACIFIC CAMPAIGN MEDAL GOOD CONDUCT MDL EAME CAMPAIGN MEDAL PHILIPPINES LIBERATION RIBBON WORLD WAR 11 VICTORY MDL</b>											
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION <b>NONE</b>											
35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES											
SMALLPOX <b>DEC 44</b>		TYPHOID <b>JAN 45</b>		TETANUS <b>MAR 44</b>		OTHER (specify) <b>NONE</b>					
36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U.S. AND RETURN					37. HIGHEST GRADE HELD <b>PFC</b>						
DATE OF DEPARTURE <b>31 DEC 44</b>			DESTINATION <b>WPTO</b>			DATE OF ARRIVAL <b>1 FEB 45</b>					
DATE OF DEPARTURE <b>27 FEB 46</b>			DESTINATION <b>USA</b>			DATE OF ARRIVAL <b>31 MAR 46</b>					
38. PRIOR SERVICE <b>NONE</b>											
40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION <b>CONV OF THE GOVT AR 615-365 15DEC44 AND RR 1-1 DEMOB.</b>											
41. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED <b>NONE</b>											
42. EDUCATION (Years) <b>8 4 0</b>											
PAY DATA VO 91012											
43. LONGEVITY FOR PAY PURPOSES <b>2 YEARS 8 MONTHS 6 DAYS</b>			44. MUSTERING OUT PAY <b>\$ 300</b>			45. SOLDIER DEPOSITS <b>NONE</b>			46. TRAVEL PAY <b>\$ 3.95</b>		
			47. TOTAL AMOUNT, NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER <b>119.35 J HARRIS COL ED</b>								
INSURANCE NOTICE											
IMPORTANT IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS SUBDIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D.C.											
48. KIND OF INSURANCE <b>Nat. Serv. U.S. Govt. None</b>		49. HOW PAID <b>Allotment Direct to V. A.</b>		50. Effective Date of Allotment Discontinuance <b>31 MAR 46</b>		51. Date of Next Premium Due (One month after 50) <b>30 APR 46</b>		52. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH <b>\$ 6.50</b>		53. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO <b>Continue</b>	
54. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives) <b>LAPSEL BUTTON ISSUED ASR SCORE (2 SEPT 45 ) 38 INACTIVE ERC FROM 5 AUG 43 TO 25 AUG 43.</b>											
55. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <b>Bernard Krawitz</b>						57. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) <b>H SILVERMAN 2ND LT SIG C. H. Silverman</b>					

WD AGO FORM 53 - 55  
1 November 1944

This form supersedes all previous editions of WD AGO Forms 53 and 55 for enlisted persons entitled to an Honorable Discharge, which will not be used after receipt of this revision.



A.3.5 Bernie's Army Discharge Certificate

VOL 203 PAGE 163

RECORDED

COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

APR 25 10 49 AM '46

BRONX COUNTY, N. Y.



**Honorable Discharge**

*This is to certify that*

BERNARD KRAWITZ 32 995 680 PRIVATE FIRST CLASS  
137TH ANTI AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY GUNNERY BATTALION BATTERY B

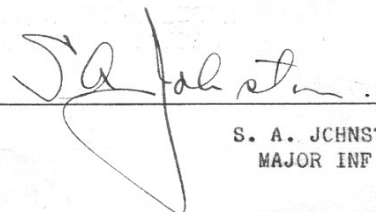
**Army of the United States**

*is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military  
service of the United States of America.*

*This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest  
and Faithful Service to this country.*

*Given at* SEPARATION CENTER FORT DIX NEW JERSEY

*Date* 10 APRIL 1946.

  
S. A. JOHNSTON  
MAJOR INF.



### A.3.6 Bernie's Birth Certificate



### A.3.7 My Eulogy at Bernie's Burial

It is said that while people may pass away, they still live on in the good deeds that they have performed and in the hearts of those who cherish their memory.

A eulogy is therefore the moment when those good deeds are recalled, and when we focus on the memory that we will cherish.

In trying to formulate my memory of Bernie, my mind went back 46 years to a small kitchen on Manida Street in the Bronx. About once a week Mama would plead with me to "please, sit down and write a few words to Bernie."

Bernie had gone straight from High School into the Army where, for much of the time between the ages of 18 and 22, he was in the Philippines. I was about 11 years old at the time. I would take the small writing pad, write what she dictated, add a few words of my own, then seal and address the envelope. The address always started as Private Bernard Krawitz, ASN 32 995 680. That number will be with me forever.

I mention this period because it was Bernie's best period, the one he remembered most fondly, and a time when I was closest to him than anyone else besides Mama. Before going overseas he was stationed in Massachusetts. When he came home on leave we shared twin beds in a room so small



that the beds touched. He would come home on leave trim, tanned, and very muscular. He always brought me some Army patches, or a cap, and even once a live bullet. We were both so joyful when he came home that, in our happiness to be together, we would beat each other with pillows.

It is incongruous that, in his final years, he should have suffered from a heart condition, because Bernie had a big heart when it came to others. Mama was always eager to get his letters, and he responded with a regular stream. When he was discharged from the Army he generously spent most of his discharge bonus on a television set for the apartment, mostly, I thought, because Mama had seen Ed Sullivan and he wanted to please her. He gave me some of his uniforms, and I cherished his boots because they had his serial number on them, 32 995 680, and I was proud of him because he was my brother and he had given them to me. In later years, in spite of his modest means, he would never forget a birthday, even if only with a card. This thoughtfulness and desire to give to others, while expecting little in return, always amazed me. But, when I recall the Bernie I knew as a roommate, I was not surprised.

Even in his declining years, when we would have our telephone conversations at four o'clock in the morning, he would always signal that he was ready to go to sleep by first asking how Margie, Alan, Saul, and "Stevie" were...and sometimes he would then remember to ask about Beri and the baby. He would apologize for bothering me and then say good night. This was his way of continuing to express his interest and concern for others, while at the same time trying not to be a burden on the family.

Bernie didn't have an easy life. As a young boy, he was not healthy. I recall having to deliver his absence notes and pick up his homework assignments at PS 48. I recall the arguments in the house about whether he should study to be a butcher, baker, or grocery major at Food Trades Vocational High School. And I recall his stubbornness in prevailing in his choice of a grocery major. And I recall that the family still considered him in frail health and was surprised that he could pass an Army physical exam. Only after he went into the Army do I recall him having robust health and a spirited personality, and this Bernie, the one I had as a roommate on Manida Street, was the true Bernie. This Bernie, strong, tanned, robust and happy, is the Bernie I choose to remember.

In spite of his hard life, Bernie persisted and met the challenges that life presented to him. He succeeded in achieving a proud and financially independent retirement. And to the last he stubbornly persisted in maintaining his own home, his independent life, and his own personality. And when life began ebbing away he amazed the whole hospital staff by demonstrating the same toughness, persistence, and stubbornness with which he had lived his life.

I last caught a glimpse of the true Bernie of my memory after his heart operation, when he was sitting in his chair on the twelfth floor of the hospital. It was like an amazing flashback. He had the same twinkle in his eye, the same bit of sly humor, and the same smile that I remembered from years ago.

During the summers of 1947 and 1948, after he had been discharged, but before I went away to college, the two of us would play blackjack or 21 for hours on a summer evening. Just before he would lay down a winning hand or take all my cards he would develop a sly grin, and that twinkle in his eyes, and an unrestrained smile that I came to recognize. In later years, with all his hardships and



medical conditions, I hadn't seen that expression of inner happiness and contained joy. But that day on the twelfth floor, there he was, grinning that sly grin and smiling through his eyes just as if we were back on Manida street and he was getting ready to lay down his cards and win the points. When he later had a setback, I was sorry that some of his nephews and nieces weren't with me to get even a fleeting glimpse of the Bernie of my memory.

I began by telling how, 46 years ago, when Bernie was far away, Mama would plead with me to sit down and write a few words to Bernie. Bernie is far away again, and again I have sat down to write a few words. I will always remember Bernie as my big brother, who was big and tanned and muscular, who slept in the next bed, who beat me with pillows and then at cards, who rooted for the Dodgers because they always lost, who made me proud, and whose number was 32 995 680.

You were generous to everyone. You were thoughtful and you remembered our birthdays. You taught my boys about "Uncle Bernie eggs." You persisted in being an independent person, and you succeeded until you could no more.

You have lived. Now may you rest in peace.

We will all remember your acts of goodness, and I will cherish my memory of you forever.

LCK  
9/29/91

#### **A.4.1 Remembering my sister Martha**

This remembrance is based on my letter to Renah, Zvi and Sarah dated September 15, 1998

-----  
My parents were married in 1917. Bertha was born in 1918, Joe in 1921, Martha in 1922, and Bernie in 1924.

My father owned his own business, a butcher shop, during this period. Early on it was kosher. Later it was not. For Russian immigrants, they had a good income. Good enough to have a car, rent a bungalow for the summer at Coney Island, and buy real estate in New York.

A property that my father bought as early as 1921 was an apartment house on Burnett Place in the Bronx. This was not only a real estate investment, but also a place for the family to live for a time in the early 1920's, and again from about 1929 until my father's death in 1943. I was born in 1932 and lived at Burnett Place until 1943.

The house at Burnett Place was in the midst of industrial properties and undeveloped lots. Only a few single-family residences were nearby, and these were inhabited by Irish and Italian families. Irish teachers staffed the public school. I have tried to figure out why a couple of Russian Jews would move to such a place. There was no Jewish life at all in this neighborhood.



It appears that, regardless of his religious upbringing in Russia (he had left there in 1905 to avoid being drafted to fight the Russo-Japanese War), by the 1920s my father was disinterested in Jewish life. My mother, on the other hand tried to cling to some Jewish identity. She enrolled the girls in a Yiddish school so they could correspond with her parents in Russia. In 1933, after my father had lost almost all of his wealth in the Crash, she enrolled Joe in a storefront Hebrew school for about six months before his Bar Mitzvah. His Bar Mitzvah took place in a synagogue over a mile away from the house. Bernie's Bar Mitzvah would have been in 1937, but the family situation was so financially precarious that she never sent Bernie to Hebrew School and he never had a Bar Mitzvah.

I was born in 1932. While growing up, I can't recall being at a synagogue service until my father took me one time in 1942. Although my mother always bought her meat at a butcher shop with some "funny writing" on the window, and I think she tried, within her means, to maintain separate dishes, we didn't observe the holidays during the 1930s. We had no identification or affiliation with organized Jewish life.

Let me give you an example of how much we were out of Jewish life. Burnett Place was located about a half mile from the East River. One late afternoon I saw a long line of men and women in dark suits and hats walking from a distant neighborhood past our house toward the river. I remember asking my mother who those strange looking people were. She told me that on a special day there are "some people" who go to the river to throw bread on the water. She didn't mention that these were Jewish people, and that this was a Jewish ceremony (Tashlich) and that this was Rosh Hashona. She knew, but we didn't. This was just another play day for me. Such was the isolation that I knew until I was about 9 years old.

We did, however know we were Jewish, but in a Yiddish way. My mother always had the Yiddish radio station on, she would buy a Yiddish paper, and my parents spoke Yiddish to each other. And the anti-Semitic Irish kids on the block provided constant reminders that I wasn't one of them. But we had no affiliation with Jewish religious life, and we were totally nonobservant of the holiday cycle. I knew there were Catholics, and I saw them go to church. I knew there were other Jews, but I didn't know that there was anything more, certainly not in our family.

In the middle of this period (1937, after two years in Junior High) Martha started to attend James Monroe High School. Joe and Bertha had preceded her at Monroe. Joe's interests were in music and art, while Bertha's main extracurricular interest focused on coping with her serious health problems. Monroe was in a distant neighborhood and required a short subway ride.

At Monroe, Martha joined a Zionist club. Coming from the home I described, I can't understand, and could never learn, what drove her to join a Zionist Club. But this act of joining a Zionist club was, I now believe, a turning point in the development of our family as the Jewish family you take for granted today.

In this Zionist club Martha was influenced by Jewish students from homes with a vastly different Jewish level of understanding, including boys who spent their nights and weekends participating in smuggling arms to the Jews in Palestine. (This was 1938-1939).



After graduating from High School Martha joined Hapoel Hamizrachi, a Zionist youth group that met in a storefront in the Bronx. I recall that she took me there once, and that a large banner covered the front of the store with "Hapoel Hamizrachi" in large letters.

The religious counselor of the Hapoel Hamizrachi youth group was a rabbinical student by the name of Meir Ostrinsky.

Once Meir entered the family he, through Martha, began to influence my life. I was only nine years old when Martha and Meir married, and had never seen the inside of a synagogue or Hebrew School. Martha took me to a synagogue on Southern Boulevard (during 1941-42 we lived on Prospect Avenue for a short time) and enrolled me in the school. We moved again, and this time, undoubtedly under the influence of Martha, my mother enrolled me in a Yeshiva that was near our new location. I dropped out after a couple of days, and my Jewish education lapsed when we moved back to Burnett Place. But as soon as my father died and we left Burnett Place for a more Jewish neighborhood, I was back in Hebrew School. This was no doubt due to the continued influence of Martha.

After the death of my father, with Bernie in the Army and Joe in the country, my mother and I lived in an apartment on Manida Street in the Bronx. At Martha's insistence, I spent many holiday periods in the various Brooklyn, Hoboken, and Brooklyn apartments of Martha and Meir. These visits provided my first real experience with the Jewish holidays and disciplines.

The first such occasion was soon after Renah was born. Martha and Meir lived in a ground floor apartment near the Cortelyou Road Station. This was near Meir's first rabbinical position in New York after they returned from Pittsburgh. I was invited for dinner and to stay over for a few days. Although I was only ten years old, I had to make my way from the Bronx by subway and find the apartment by myself, because my mother could not miss work. I didn't even think about the travel time, and must have started out late. I arrived, carrying my little suitcase, well after dark and rang the bell. Martha opened the door and hustled me into the back room, and then to wash. She then stuck a yarmulke on my head and brought me into the dining room where I found some strangers sitting with Meir. They were all reading aloud from a book. I saw that Meir was unhappy with my arrival, but he said little about it. That was my first real Seder.

After the guests left, I heard Martha trying to quiet Meir's anger over my late arrival. When I arrived home I told my mother that I didn't want to go back because Meir got so angry with me just for coming a little bit late. She explained that the guests were people from his congregation who he was trying to impress, that the holiday started with sundown, and that I had embarrassed him by arriving late. My mother impressed on me that I had to give Meir the utmost respect when Martha invited me to their home. He was, after all, a rabbi.

This little tale typifies the role I think Martha played in bringing the family back into Jewish life. She never separated herself from us because we were so backward, or a potential cause of embarrassment. Just the opposite. By keeping her home always open to us, we became students of the Jewish customs and ceremonies we saw there. After a while, through Martha's efforts, Meir learned to relax with us and to be our teacher. Through Martha's hospitality, their home became our



family's fixed point from which we could develop our own levels of understanding and identification.

The Judaizing influence of Martha and Meir was felt by all of the members of the family, not only me. Later, when I had my own children, Martha's hospitality and Meir's humor combined to make our visits most memorable. To honor such memories, Saul named his son Nadav Meir and Alan named his daughter Meira (Meryl).

In looking back over the family's history, I conclude that Martha played a unique role in shaping the family as we know it today. Of the four older children in the family, only one, Martha, had within her in her teens a sufficient Jewish identity to affiliate herself with the Jewish community. Later, her special way of influencing her extended family, children of Russian immigrants who could very well have disappeared as Jews, is largely responsible for the strong Jewish identification of many of us today.

My remembrance of Martha emphasizes the importance she placed on maintaining family relationships. She knew that the maintenance of these relationships took some effort and mutual respect. Without such effort, and the kind of open home that Martha created, relationships between siblings and cousins could have withered, even in a single generation. She is now gone. The future is up to the next generation.

#### **A.4.2 Remembering my brother-in-law Meir Ostrinsky**

This remembrance is based on my letter to Sarah Kaye dated November 9, 2000.

-----  
I remember Meir differently than do his own children. I remember him as an intellectual who could think through religious questions for himself and on his own terms and rationalize deviations when necessary. They think I misinterpret him, and that any deviations I may remember were his response to "emergencies". They seem concerned that my recollections diminish him by today's standards.

My recollections can seem like deviations from today's common standards. Nevertheless I don't think they diminish him at all because his standards were higher than today's common standards. I recall him with admiration for his intellect and the rabbinical mission he saw for himself. I realize that his children may never have seen that side of their father. Perhaps, by the time they were old enough to notice, he was no longer as free to exercise his innate intellectual ability as he was in his earlier years.

I therefore think that both of our memories of him are accurate, although different. The difference arises because my memories are from earlier times than theirs, when he was younger and capable of greater control of what he saw as his rabbinical obligations.

I have thought about how I could briefly explain all of this. I am sorry that I haven't found a short cut.

I think that Meir's career spanned two eras in American Jewish history. He was trained and began his career during one era. My observations are from this first era. His children's observations are from



the years of the second era.

What were these two eras? I can define them only by digressing into history. I'll define the first era. Then I'll come back to Meir. Then I'll deal with the second era.

Here are the salient historical points leading up to the first era.

By 1880, the Jewish population in America was about 250,000. The new émigrés were mostly from the British Isles, Germany, and Holland. These were the countries with ports on the Baltic and North Seas.

American Judaism in 1880 was therefore West European Judaism. It had been strongly influenced by the Enlightenment and western standards of philosophy and scholarship.

Jews from Eastern Europe were landlocked. Few Eastern European Jews could reach the sailing ports. Thus only one out of six Jews in America was of East European extraction in 1880.

The American Jewish congregations were loosely affiliated, although two recognizable blocs existed. A Reform bloc represented the extension to America of the German Jewish Reform movement. A Conservative bloc represented traditional Sephardic Judaism as practiced in England, Holland and the West Indies. These two blocs split in 1885.

The Reform bloc organized the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and Hebrew Union College in 1885.

The traditional Sephardic bloc organized the first Jewish Theological Seminary in 1887.

The first mass migration of East European Jews began after about 1885. It was assisted by the spread of railroads from the Baltic ports through Germany and Poland to the Ukraine. Russian émigrés, assisted by German and French Jewish philanthropies, took the trains to the Baltic ports. (My mother went to Libau in Latvia. My father went to Antwerp, Belgium.) The flow accelerated when steamships began offering Atlantic cheap crossings in 1890. Zionists went to the Black Sea ports.

Most East European immigrants to America threw their children into becoming Americans by learning English in the public schools. They themselves were mostly non-religious, but supported a rich secular Yiddish culture of theater, music, and literature. Surveys showed that the vast majority of Jews were working on Saturdays, and the Yiddish Theaters were filled on Friday nights and Saturday. Only 25% of the immigrant children were receiving any Jewish education, and that was after public school one or two days a week.

The mass of devout Jews of Eastern Europe didn't come to America. Their rabbis in Europe discouraged them, saying that America was a religious wasteland. The first rabbi who was coaxed to come was Rabbi Jacob Joseph, and his chief function was to supervise the supply of kosher meat. He spoke neither English nor German, the common languages of the Jewish establishment, but Yiddish.



The Eastern Europeans organized socially around their nations of origin. In New York the East European Jews founded, as a high school, the Isaac Elchanan Seminary in 1897, based on Yiddish, and along East European lines. It had a one man faculty and met in basements.

Later, in 1915, when Elchanan graduates found the schedules of CCNY conflicted with their religious requirements, Bernard Revel was invited to organize a Western style college, Yeshiva College for both secular and religious studies. He incorporated Elchanan as a division of Yeshivah College. (Revel was a graduate of Dropsie College.) His graduates would be English speaking. The founding of Yeshiva College was opposed by the the Agudah rabbis, representing the most recent waves of immigration. The Agudah rabbis thought an English speaking Western style college represented assimilation, and was a compromise with Orthodox tradition. They opposed Yeshiva college.

(Solomon Schechter had earlier organized the second Jewish Theological Seminary, in about 1901, also to serve the East European immigrants. He selected eminent scholars from West European Universities for his faculty and affiliated JTS with Columbia University to provide the secular courses. The West European orientation and the Columbia affiliation of JTS proved unattractive to the children of the East European immigrants.)

Immigration from Eastern Europe continued, with a pause for WW I, until the Johnson Act of 1924 terminated East European immigration to the United States.

The “first era” that I will refer to began in 1924 when American Orthodoxy had to develop itself without a flow of East European émigrés. (Negotiations to combine Yeshiva College and the Jewish Theological Seminary started in 1924 but were terminated in 1928). Without a flow of immigrants, Orthodoxy began to undergo a process of Americanization. Yiddish declined, elementary secular education rose, secular university education became popular, dress became indistinguishable, mixed dancing was practiced, and many congregations with Orthodox rabbis adopted mixed seating and called themselves “traditional”, etc. The rabbis spoke English.

Evidence of this Americanization process is not hard to recognize. Two graduates of Yeshiva College, Meir and Rabbi Rackman of Far Rockaway were both fluent in English as their primary language, although both knew Yiddish. They both dressed in American styles and were well versed in secular subjects. Mixed dancing was permitted at both Yeshiva College and at Rabbi Rackman’s congregation, Sharai Tfillah..... and the list can go on...

Yeshiva College, that had been founded along Western lines to preserve an East European Jewish religious culture, had developed Western standards of scholarship and intellectual discipline by the time Meir graduated in 1941. Yiddish culture societies still existed. I worked for one. But, as the immigrant generation died off, so did Yiddish culture.

This brief history of the “first era” provides the background for my personal interaction with Meir during that portion of his career that occurred during this “first era”. It started with his graduation from Yeshiva College in 1941 and extended until the 1960’s.

Meir had a pretty firm picture of the obligation he had assumed by becoming an American Orthodox



rabbi. He told Marge and me in 1957 that American Conservative and Reform rabbis were only “preachers and teachers”. An Orthodox rabbi, he said, operated at a higher level. He was, in addition, a master of the law and competent to interpret the law to circumstances. Conversely, a rabbi who failed to interpret the law to circumstances was reducing himself to the lower level roles of preacher and teacher. Thus, in Meir’s view, his own obligations as a rabbi required him to be more than just a preacher and teacher.

Marge and I had only recently become engaged. This was her first visit to the New York family. We were staying at the Ostrinsky house over Succoth. Very soon after he defined his rabbinical authority for us, we saw him apply it. Here is what happened. The phone rang on Shabbat while we were out walking with Martha. Meir let it ring a few times and then answered it. He spoke with Marge’s father who was worried that she hadn’t called him. Immediately on our return to the house, Meir ordered Marge to call her father. It was only a few hours to the end of Shabbat, but he insisted that she call her father immediately, during Shabbat.

I was already 26 years old, and no longer intimidated by Meir. So I asked for explanations. Why did he answer the phone on Shabbat? And why did he order Marge to call her father on Shabbat? His answers revealed the systematic way he approached Jewish law in his rabbinical role.

Why did he answer the phone? He said that his congregants know that he is not to be called on Shabbat. Therefore, when the phone rang so persistently he concluded that someone was in anguish. His reading of the law was that, even on Shabbat, one is not allowed to either cause pain or allow pain to persist. The relief of pain is a higher level of obligation than observing a “fence” by not picking up the phone. That is why he answered the call. He never used the word “emergency”. He only thought in terms of legal priorities.

Why did he insist that Marge call her father immediately? He explained that, in spite of Shabbat, she must observe the commandment “to honor ones mother and father”. He explained that her observance of this commandment took precedence over the “fence” that forbids using the phone.

There was clearly no emergency here. Marge’s father already knew that she had arrived safely. But Meir’s legal logic gave precedence to direct commandments.

When Meir told me about the high priority to “honor ones mother and father”, I recalled a previous instance when he had used the same logic. When his mother died in Chicago he felt compelled to attend the funeral, even though it required that he travel by train over Shabbat. I was staying with Martha for that weekend. I was only about 16 then, and had already been scolded many times for arriving late on Friday night, so I knew the prohibition. So I asked Martha why he was able to travel on Shabbat and I was forbidden. Her answer was what he probably told her. The commandment to “honor a parent” takes precedence over the “fence” forbidding travel on Shabbat.

Again, there was no emergency. There was only the need to reconcile conflicts between laws. The Chicago rabbis would not delay the burial. He wanted to observe the commandment to honor his mother. Something had to give. But there was no threat to life. Would today’s Orthodox rabbis dare to distinguish between a Biblical commandment and a “fence”?



I saw this logic applied again in 1959, at my mother's funeral. I was surprised to find Meir officiating at the funeral, standing directly at her graveside, and even participating in shoveling dirt onto the coffin. I remembered that he did not enter the cemetery at my father's funeral. He only watched through the iron grillwork fence (which has been taken down since then.). I was only 11 years old when my father died. I would never ask Meir why he only watched from a distance. So I asked my mother. She told me that he couldn't come in because he was a Cohen. Recalling that incident, now, sixteen years later, I asked him why he could come to my mother's grave but not my father's. He told me that even a Cohen is obligated to enter the cemetery and attend to the burial of a parent in order to fulfill the commandment to "honor one's mother and father". But, I said, she wasn't your mother. His answer was that "I felt that she was like a mother to me."

Again, this was no emergency. (He didn't mention the authority of Lev.21.1 and 21.2 that obligates the Cohen to attend to a parent. Thus I am dismayed when Zvi doesn't honor his own parents at the cemetery.) Meir's children must have been at my mother's burial. But they probably were not yet aware enough to ask Meir what he, as a Cohen, was doing there. This is my point. There was a side of him that they may have been too young to recognize. It is the side of him that I remember and admire, most clearly.

Here are a couple of other examples of his capacity to think for himself during those years. They might seem strange in today's environment, but he wasn't then operating in today's environment.

Marge and I wanted to maintain a kosher kitchen. Our particular concern was in washing the dishes. What was his opinion about using a dishwasher for both dairy and meat? This was 1957. Martha had talked about getting a dishwasher for a couple of years but hadn't done so. We thought there might be a problem. Meir thought only a moment. Then he said that, given the high temperature of the water and the strong detergents that were available, he saw no problem so long as the dishes were washed separately. So this is what we have done for the 43 years since we set up housekeeping. It is not what we hear a lot of other people doing today, however. I laugh, and think of Meir, when I hear about all the layers of fences that people manage to invent around a "kid in its mother's milk".

Another example. While we were visiting the Ostrinsky home during the 1960's, Meir came home with one of those long Italian breads. He insisted that I taste this bread that he had "discovered" at an Italian Bakery in Sheepshead Bay. By this point in our relationship I enjoyed asking him questions about everything and anything. And he enjoyed answering. I was curious about his selection of this bread. So I asked him whether this was from a kosher bakery. If not, how he could just eat the bread from such a bakery? Didn't he need to see an OU? I wasn't concerned for myself. I was only asking a rhetorical question to hear his rationale. He said that he asked the baker about the ingredients. The baker gave him an acceptable answer. So he accepted the bread as kosher. I was impressed with the simplicity of the logic. I follow the same logic myself now. But a lot of other people, as you know, wouldn't touch the stuff. I doubt whether, in later years, he would let himself be seen carrying that bread through Sheepshead Bay.

(From here on I am interpreting events rather than retelling direct conversations.)



In 1971, Alan's Bar Mitzvah was held in a Conservative congregation in Schenectady. Meir attended, accepted the Cohen aliyah, and enjoyed himself. Looking back, this corresponded to the end of the "first era".

The "second era", which continues today, had imposed itself on Meir's career by 1974, I believe. What was this "second era", and what caused it? Lets look at the history of that period.

The Johnson Act of 1924 had cut off East European immigration. But the Johnson Act was lifted after World War II to allow the resettlement of refugees, including East European Jews. Many of the East European Jews that began arriving in the 1950's were quite different from those who starting coming in 1890. The 1890-1914 immigrants, like Mama and Papa, came as individual refugees who freely joined, or didn't join the Jewish community. Many of the 1950's immigrants did not come as individuals. They came as members of organized religious communities that transplanted themselves on American soil. These organized communities were led by their own rebbes and came with their own community infrastructure. These immigrant communities did not disperse into American Orthodoxy any more than the 1890 immigrants dispersed into the West European Judaism they found in America. These intact communities built their own self-imposed shtetls in America.

Like the 1890's wave of East European immigrants, the rebbes of these East European religious communities of the 1950's challenged the authenticity of the existing Americanized Orthodox community, where Yiddish had all but disappeared and western standards of dress, speech, and behavior had been adopted. This challenge caused the American Orthodox community to defend its own authenticity by reverting to long discarded East European practices and by publicly distancing itself from the American Conservative and Reform communities. This distancing was evident by public statements from American Orthodox authorities that the Conservative and Reform movements here and in Israel were illegitimate. (Benji Gabler once told me that his teacher told him not to even talk to someone who was not Orthodox. He was only in second grade, or so, and didn't realize that he was already talking to one of the pagans.)

Meir, a man intellectually of the "west", was caught up in this environmental shift toward the East European definitions of Jewish practices and segregation. We felt sorry for him, but we all understood. But the pressure on him due to the distancing of the Orthodox from the Conservative community directly impacted our family.

In 1974, Saul's Bar Mitzvah was also held in a Conservative congregation in Washington. Meir came to Washington on Friday, but did not attend the Bar Mitzvah. He went to an Orthodox synagogue on Saturday morning and joined us afterward at the Kiddush, where he ate no food.

In 1978, he totally missed Steve's Bar Mitzvah. He came the next day, as everyone else was leaving.

Martha and Meir never told us why they didn't attend for Saul and Steve. They didn't have to. And we didn't ask for an explanation. We had a pretty good idea from other conversations.

As I observed what was happening during this "second era", through our family events and other



conversations, I never believed that Meir bent to these pressures out of intellectual conviction. I thought that he conformed only because he was expected to by the congregation. This supposition seemed confirmed after he retired from the congregation.

The influence of this “second era” on Meir ended in about 1991.

By the time of Alan’s wedding in 1991, Meir had effectively retired from the congregation. He was no longer concerned about whether someone might see him associating with pagans someplace. He was once again a free man of his own conviction. He not only attended Alan’s wedding in a Conservative congregation, he graciously accepted the invitation to participate and gave a very nice talk.

It is too bad that, perhaps due to the pressures created by the 1950’s East European invasion, his children grew up mostly during the “second era”. Thus they didn’t see him the way I did, as this strong intellect and a master of the law, and not just a guardian of rote adherence to the nearest applicable “fence”. I hope that these anecdotes enable them to see him differently.

I was reminded of Meir’s definition of an Orthodox rabbi on our recent trip to visit the Jewish communities in Turkey. As I said earlier, Meir had a very firm conviction about the obligations of the Orthodox rabbi that he wanted to be. He told me that he likened his role to that of a rabbi in Lithuania where each rabbi ruled for his jurisdiction in his own way, without regard to rulings of the neighboring jurisdictions. He had to only assure to his own conscience that the laws of highest weight took precedence.

The Turkish cities of Istanbul and Izmir both have sizable Jewish communities. These communities date from the 1400’s and claim roots in Spain. Each has its own Chief Rabbi. I am sure that these Chief Rabbis do not concede any piety to East European Rabbis in Brooklyn. The roots of the Shulchan Aruch, after all, are Sephardi and not Polish. Yet these Chief Rabbis seem capable to look past the “fences” to the commandments, just as Meir could.

I noted, for example, how they observe the commandment to “honor the Sabbath day”. They observe it by sending shuttle busses to bring people to Synagogue on Shabbat. And by using microphones in synagogues so that people can hear. How can these rabbis tear down fences that other communities worship? Perhaps these descendants from the Spanish tradition, and not the Hassidic East Europeans, represent the “Authentic Tradition”. Perhaps the obligation to distinguish between commandments and mere “fences” is a characteristic of authenticity. I thought Meir would be pleased to see his own thoughts in this creative rabbinical authority.

To summarize, I don’t mean to suggest that Meir was a religious radical or played loose with the law. On the contrary, he was deeply traditional, but in the “western” way. He certainly observed all of the “fences”. But he also double-checked to assure that commandments always had precedence over fences when the two were in conflict. He did not approach tradition by rote.

My sons certainly enjoyed the brief times they spent with their Uncle Meir. They found him both



entertaining and intellectually stimulating. As a result, without any suggestion from me, Alan and Saul named two of their children in his memory. He is the only one in our family so doubly honored. That speaks for their admiration for him.

Our family has been greatly enriched by Meir's presence. I can't imagine how our family would have developed without him. Thus he lives on through the family we are. Nadav Meir and Meira Brocha (Meryl) carry his name into the future.





Bernie 1943



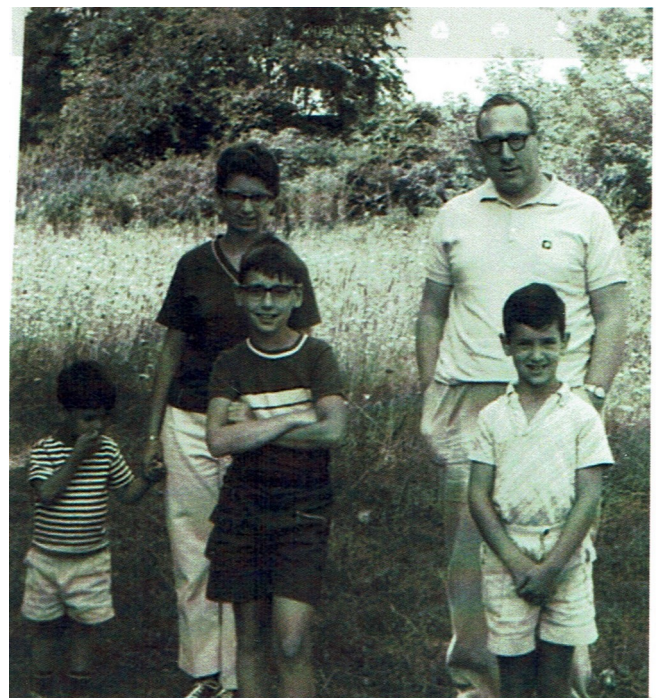
Mama, Bernie, Larry 1943



Bernie Philippines December 1944



Joe, Bernie and Larry 1966



Bernie and family 1968



# DESCENDENCY CHART OF THE RISSIN FAMILY

Unknown ABRAMOWITZ

sp: Unknown ABRAMOWITZ

Zire(Sarah) ABRAMOWITZ

b 1859-Minsk

d 1934

sp: Beryl (Ber) LIPACK

b 1856-Minsk

m 1873-Russia

Louis LIPACK

b 1874-Minsk

sp: Rebecca LIPACK

b 1874-Minsk

m 1899-Minsk

d 22 Nov 1958-Red Bank, NJ

Jacob LIPACK

b 1881-Minsk

Sophie LIPACK

b 1890

sp: Abraham BINNEMAN

Morris LIPACK

b 1877

Joseph LIPACK

b 1887-Minsk

Beyle ABRAMOWITZ

b 1865-Verischak, Russia

d 21 May 1937-Gorki, Belorussia

sp: Nechemia Zvi RISSIN (Girsh)

b 1865-Russia

m 1889-Russia

d 10 Oct 1941-Verischak, Belorussia

Emma ROSEN Eshke

b 21 Sep 1890-Verischak, Belorussia

d 24 Jul 1959-Nursing Home, Far Rockaway, NY

sp: Harry KRAWITZ Aaron

b 19 Oct 1893-Kiev Russia

m 21 Oct 1917-New York, N.Y.

d 31 May 1943-Lincoln Hospital, Bronx NY

Bertha KRAWITZ Basha

b 20 Oct 1918-New York

sp: Simon SPIELMAN Shmuel

b 15 Jan 1915-New York

m 4 Jul 1941-Yeshiva University, New York

d May 1988-Laguardia Hosp, New York

Howard Aaron SPIELMAN Zvi

b 24 Jul 1946-S, Far Rockaway NY

sp: Eileen BRODSKY

b 23 Oct 1946

m 29 Aug 1971-Cong Sharai Tefilla, NY

Hillel David SPIELMAN

b 13 Sep 1975-Boston, Mass

sp: Chana SCHOFFMAN

m 2 / Dec 1996-Long Island, NY



# THE RISSIN FAMILY

**Adina Miryl SPIELMAN**  
b 19 Mar 2001

**Ayelet Ruth SPIELMAN**  
b 30 Oct 2003-Highland Park, NJ

**Jonathan Mordechai SPIELMAN**  
b 14 Jul 1978-Boston, Mass

**sp: Shira Yael GRABER**  
m 12 May 2002-Baltimore, Maryland

**Leora Shoshana SPIELMAN**  
b 15 Jun 2004

**Gail SPIELMAN Zahava**  
b 6 Jul 1950-Rockaway Beach Hosp, NY

**sp: Henry GABLER Zvi**  
b Dec 1946-New York  
m -Cong Sharni Tefilla, Far Rockaway, NY  
d Aug 1991-New York, NY

**Benjamin GABLER**  
b 6 Nov 1984-New York Hosp, New York

**sp: David WEINSTEIN**  
m 10 Jul 1995-Brooklyn, NY

**Rachel Chana WEINSTEIN**  
b 11 Nov 1998

**Joseph Jacob KRAVIT**  
b 28 Jan 1921-New York  
d 9 Oct 1997-Olympia, WA

**sp: Betty STILL**  
b 6 May 1923-Los Angeles  
m 1 Jun 1956-New York  
d 17 Mar 1970-New York

**Susan KRAVIT**  
b 16 Nov 1959-New York City

**sp: Kathy SMITH**  
b 28 Jun 1952-Cumberland, MD

**Elianna KRAVIT-SMITH**  
b 14 Sep 2000-Tiquisate, Guatemala

**Thomas KRAVIT**  
b 15 Mar 1961-New York City

**Martha KRAWITZ Masha**  
b 12 Oct 1922-New York  
d 12 Sep 1998-St. John's Hospital, Queens, NY

**sp: Meir Simcha OSTRINSKY Rabbi**  
b 7 Jul 1906-Suhavila, Poland  
m 7 Dec 1941-Yeshiva University, NY  
d 3 Aug 1992-Brooklyn, NY

**Renah OSTRINSKY**  
b 3 Jul 1943-Beth El(Brookdale)Hosp, Bklyn

**Zvi OSTRIN**  
b 13 Mar 1947-Maimonides Hosp, Bklyn

**sp: Gail GRAYMAN**  
m Jun 1972-Schenectady, NY

**David OSTRIN**  
b 18 Apr 1977-Brooklyn

**sp: Sarah BLACK**  
m 30 Jan 2001-Israel



# THE RISSIN FAMILY

**Morasha OSTRIN**  
b 1 Feb 2002-Netanya, Israel

**Meir Simcha OSTRIN**  
b 27 Feb 2004-Israel

**Sarah OSTRINSKY**  
b 8 Feb 1952-Maimonides Hosp, Brooklyn

**sp: Thomas KAYE**  
b 24 Jul 1952  
m Aug 1975-White Shul, Far Rockaway, NY

**Rachel KAYE**  
b 12 Mar 1984-Birthing Center, Man. NY

**Daniella Rose KAYE**  
b 13 Aug 1989-At home, Stony Brook, NY

**Bernard KRAWITZ Baruch**  
b 26 May 1924-Bronx, NY  
d 28 Sep 1991-Beth Israel Hosp, Man. Tishri 20

**Lawrence Charles KRAVITZ Aryeh**  
b 27 Jul 1932-Lincoln Hospital, Bronx, NY

**sp: Marjorie Ruth HELMAN Malka Rivka**  
b 26 Mar 1937-Mount Sinai Hosp, Chicago, IL  
m 9 Jun 1957-Cong. Rodfei Zedek, Chicago, IL

**Alan Bruce KRAVITZ Aaron Benjamin**  
b 9 Jul 1958-Beth Israel Hosp, Boston, Mass

**sp: Sandra Debby KRESCH Sara Dvora**  
b 29 May 1961-Sinai Hospital, Detroit, MI  
m 26 May 1991-B, Mich

**Meryl Beth KRAVITZ Meira Brocha**  
b 5 Oct 1994-Shady Grove Hosp., Rockville, MD

**Evan Samuel David KRAVITZ Yitzchak**  
b 8 Jul 1997-Shady Grove Hospital, MD

**Natalie Anne KRAVITZ Nechama**  
b 14 May 1999-Shady Grove Hosp, MD

**Saul Abram KRAVITZ Shaul Avraham**  
b 20 May 1961-Beth Israel Hosp, Boston MA

**sp: Beryl Ann ROTHSTEIN**  
b 1 May 1964-Pittsburgh, PA  
m 11 Aug 1985-Bnai Emunah Syn., Pa

**Ayelet Hadas KRAVITZ**  
b 4 May 1990-Haifa, Israel

**Nadav Meir KRAVITZ**  
b 5 Aug 1992-Haifa, Israel

**Talya Sarah KRAVITZ**  
b 31 Oct 1997-S, MD

**Elana Miriam KRAVITZ**  
b 31 Oct 1997-S, MD

**Steven Jacob KRAVITZ Zvi Jacob**  
b 16 May 1965-Ellis Hosp.Schenectady NY

**sp: Esther KALEKO SIEGEL**  
b 19 Sep 1947-Chicago, IL  
m 11 Jun 1995-Cong Beth El, Bethesda, MD

**Benjamin Kaleko (Baruch Natan) KRAVITZ**  
b 28 Jun 1994-Yekaterinburg, Russia

**Daniel Kaleko (Daniel Shimon) KRAVITZ**  
b 6 Nov 1995-Yekaterinburg, Russia



# THE RISSIN FAMILY

**Mary Rosen ISAACSON Meira Rachel**  
b 1892-Vereshchaki, Belarus, Russia  
d Sep 1922-New York

sp: **Jacob ISAACSON**  
d May 1953-New York

**Ethel Isaacson XENOS**  
b Feb 1922-New York  
d Feb 1997-Ft. Lauderdale, FL

sp: **Peter XENOS**  
m Jan 1944-Bronx, NY  
d Apr 1966-New York

**Mary Xenos CHAMBERS**  
b May 1944-Bronx, New York  
d May 1968-Yonkers, New York

sp: **Allen CHAMBERS**  
m 1963-New York  
d 1994-South Carolina

**Mindy CHAMBERS**  
b 1965  
d 1984-Missing from Chandler, AZ

**Kaleopy Xenos SMITH**  
b Dec 1946-New York

sp: **Richard SMITH**  
b 1945  
m 1966

**Traci SMITH**  
b Feb 1971

**Lisa SMITH**  
b Jun 1972

sp: **Vincent WHALLEY**  
m 2001-Rockledge, FL

**Casey SMITH**  
b Oct 1990

**Stephanie Xenos FURST**  
b May 1953-New York

sp: **Monroe FURST**  
b 1955  
m 1980-Elizabeth, NJ

**Leah FURST**  
b 1982

**Sarah FURST**  
b 1987

**Itzak ROSEN**  
b 1894-Vereshchaki, Russia  
d -New York

sp: **Lena ROSEN**

**Milton ROSEN**

**Leon ROSEN**

**Rose ROSEN**

**Robert ROSEN**

**Phillip ROSEN**



# THE RISSIN FAMILY

**Morris ROSEN**

b 1897-Verischak, Russia  
d 1955-New Jersey

sp: Ray ROSEN

d 1952-New Jersey

**Leonard ROSEN**

sp: Adelaide ROSEN

m 25 Dec 1955

unk-LR1 ROSEN

unk-LR2 ROSEN

unk-LR3 ROSEN

**Eliezer Yosef RISSIN**

b 1900-Verischak, Russia  
d 20 Sep 1941-Leningrad, Russia

sp: Dvora TSEITLINA

b 1900-Astashkovichi, Russia (near Verischak)  
m 1934-Verischak, Russia  
d Oct 1989-Leningrad, Russia

**Fira RISSIN**

b 1935-Leningrad, Russia

sp: Efim KHAZAN

m 1960-Russia

**Victoria RISSIN**

b 1965-Leningrad, Russia

sp: Alexi LOPUHKIN

**Eliezer LOPUHKIN**

b 9 Jul 1990-Manhattan

sp: Yevgeny AGARONNIK

m 18 Aug 1996-N, NY

**Nicole AGARONNIK**

b 29 May 1997-New York

**Levi AGARONNIK**

b 28 May 1999-New York, NY

**Pesha RISSIN**

b 1905-Verischak, Belorussia  
d -Gomel, Belorussia

sp: Yitzhak CHAIKEN

**Boris CHAIKEN**

b 1939-Gorki, Russia  
d 11 Dec 1941-Ulyanofsk, Russia

**Sara Leah (Sonya) RISSIN**

b 1907-Verischak, Russia  
d 1993-In Israel

sp: Israel GUSIN

**Boris GUSIN**

b May 1936-Gorki

**Bebic (Berthold) GUSIN**

b 1938-Gorki, Russia  
d 11 Dec 1941-Ulyanofsk, Russia

**Marc (Morris) GUSIN**

b Jan 1941-Gorki, Russia  
d 12 Dec 1941-Ulyanofsk, USSR



# THE RISSIN FAMILY

**Semyon GUSIN**  
b 1945-Gomel, Russia

sp: **Ella GUSIN**

**Lena GUSIN**  
b 1970-Russia

**Marina GUSIN**  
b 1974-Russia

**Blume RISSIN**  
b 1910-Belorussia  
d 1925-Russian Hospital

blume rissin  
b 1910-Belorussia  
d 1925-Russian Hospital

semion gusin  
b 1945-Gomel, Russia

ella gusin

lena gusin

marina gusin

semion gusin

b 1945-Gomel, Russia

d 1970-Russia

marina gusin

b 1974-Russia

d 1980-Russia

ella gusin

b 1970-Russia

semion gusin

b 1945-Gomel, Russia

marina gusin

b 1974-Russia

d 1980-Russia

ella gusin

b 1970-Russia

d 1980-Russia

semion gusin

b 1945-Gomel, Russia

d 1970-Russia

marina gusin

b 1974-Russia

semion gusin

b 1945-Gomel, Russia

d 1970-Russia

ella gusin

b 1970-Russia

d 1980-Russia

marina gusin

b 1974-Russia

d 1980-Russia

semion gusin

b 1945-Gomel, Russia

d 1970-Russia

ella gusin

b 1970-Russia

d 1980-Russia

marina gusin

b 1974-Russia

d 1980-Russia

semion gusin

b 1945-Gomel, Russia

d 1970-Russia

ella gusin

b 1970-Russia

d 1980-Russia

marina gusin

b 1974-Russia

d 1980-Russia



# DESCENDENCY CHART OF THE KRAVTSOV FAMILY

**Moshe LESHNER**

**sp: Chava LESHNER**

**Brucha LESHNER**

d 1928-Russia

**sp: Pesach KRAVTSOV**

d 14 Dec 1941-Russia

**Harry KRAWITZ Aaron**

b 19 Oct 1893-Kiev Russia

d 31 May 1943-Lincoln Hospital, Bronx NY

**sp: Emma ROSEN Eshke**

b 21 Sep 1890-Verischak, Belorussia

m 21 Oct 1917-New York, N.Y.

d 24 Jul 1959-Nursing Home, Far Rockaway, NY

**Bertha KRAWITZ Basha**

b 20 Oct 1918-New York

**sp: Simon SPIELMAN Shmuel**

b 15 Jan 1915-New York

m 4 Jul 1941-Yeshiva University, New York

d May 1988-Laguardia Hosp, New York

**Howard Aaron SPIELMAN Zvi**

b 24 Jul 1946-S, Far Rockaway NY

**sp: Eileen BRODSKY**

b 23 Oct 1946

m 29 Aug 1971-Cong Sharai Tefilla, NY

**Hillel David SPIELMAN**

b 13 Sep 1975-Boston, Mass

**sp: Chana SCHOFFMAN**

m 27 Dec 1998-Long Island, NY

**Adina Miryl SPIELMAN**

b 19 Mar 2001

**Ayelet Ruth SPIELMAN**

b 30 Oct 2003-Highland Park, NJ

**Jonathan Mordechai SPIELMAN**

b 14 Jul 1978-Boston, Mass

**sp: Shira Yael GRABER**

m 12 May 2002-Baltimore, Maryland

**Leora Shoshana SPIELMAN**

b 15 Jun 2004

**Gail SPIELMAN Zahava**

b 6 Jul 1950-Rockaway Beach Hosp, NY

**sp: Henry GABLER Zvi**

b Dec 1946-New York

m -Cong Sharai Tefilla, Far Rockaway, NY

d Aug 1991-New York, NY

**Benjamin GABLER**

b 6 Nov 1984-New York Hosp, New York

**sp: David WEINSTEIN**

m 10 Jul 1995-Brooklyn, NY

**Rachel Chana WEINSTEIN**

b 11 Nov 1998

**Joseph Jacob KRAVTSOV**

b 28 Jan 1921-New York

d 9 Oct 1997-Olympia, WA



# THE KRAVTSOV FAMILY

**sp: Betty STILL**

b 6 May 1923-Los Angeles

m 1 Jun 1956-New York

d 17 Mar 1970-New York

**Susan KRAVIT**

b 16 Nov 1959-New York City

**sp: Kathy SMITH**

b 28 Jun 1952-Cumberland, MD

**Elianna KRAVIT-SMITH**

b 14 Sep 2000-Tiquisate, Guatemala

**Thomas KRAVIT**

b 15 Mar 1961-New York City

**Martha KRAWITZ Masha**

b 12 Oct 1922-New York

d 12 Sep 1998-St. John's Hospital, Queens, NY

**sp: Meir Simcha OSTRINSKY Rabbi**

b 7 Jul 1906-Suhavila, Poland

m 7 Dec 1941-Yeshiva University, NY

d 3 Aug 1992-Brooklyn, NY

**Renah OSTRINSKY**

b 3 Jul 1943-Beth El(Brookdale)Hosp, Bklyn

**Zvi OSTRIN**

b 13 Mar 1947-Maimonides Hosp, Bklyn

**sp: Gail GRAYMAN**

m Jun 1972-Schenectady, NY

**David OSTRIN**

b 18 Apr 1977-Brooklyn

**sp: Sarah BLACK**

m 30 Jan 2001-Israel

**Morasha OSTRIN**

b 1 Feb 2002-Nctanya, Israel

**Meir Simcha OSTRIN**

b 27 Feb 2004-Israel

**Sarah OSTRINSKY**

b 8 Feb 1952-Maimonides Hosp, Brooklyn

**sp: Thomas KAYE**

b 24 Jul 1952

m Aug 1975-White Shul, Far Rockaway, NY

**Rachel KAYE**

b 12 Mar 1984-Birthing Center, Man. NY

**Daniella Rose KAYE**

b 13 Aug 1989-At home, Stony Brook, NY

**Bernard KRAWITZ Baruch**

b 26 May 1924-Bronx, NY

d 28 Sep 1991-Beth Israel Hosp, Man.Tishri 20

**Lawrence Charles KRAVITZ Aryeh**

b 27 Jul 1932-Lincoln Hospital, Bronx, NY

**sp: Marjorie Ruth HELMAN Malka Rivka**

b 26 Mar 1937-Mount Sinai Hosp, Chicago, IL

m 9 Jun 1957-Cong. Rodfei Zedek, Chicago, IL

**Alan Bruce KRAVITZ Aaron Benjamin**

b 9 Jul 1958-Beth Israel Hosp, Boston, Mass



# THE KRAVTSOV FAMILY

sp: Sandra Debby KRESCH Sara Dvora  
b 29 May 1961-Sinai Hospital, Detroit, MI  
m 26 May 1991-B, Mich

Meryl Beth KRAVITZ Melra Brocha  
b 5 Oct 1994-Shady Grove Hosp., Rockville, MD

Evan Samuel David KRAVITZ Yitzchak  
b 8 Jul 1997-Shady Grove Hospital, MD

Natalie Anne KRAVITZ Nechama  
b 14 May 1999-Shady Grove Hosp, MD

Saul Abram KRAVITZ Shaul Avraham  
b 20 May 1961-Beth Israel Hosp, Boston MA

sp: Beryl Ann ROTHSTEIN  
b 1 May 1964-Pittsburgh, PA  
m 11 Aug 1985-Bnai Emunah Syn., Pa

Ayelet Hadas KRAVITZ  
b 4 May 1990-Haifa, Israel

Nadav Meir KRAVITZ  
b 5 Aug 1992-Haifa, Israel

Talya Sarah KRAVITZ  
b 31 Oct 1997-S, MD

Elana Miriam KRAVITZ  
b 31 Oct 1997-S, MD

Steven Jacob KRAVITZ Zvi Jacob  
b 16 May 1965-Ellis Hosp.Schenectady NY

sp: Esther KALEKO SIEGEL  
b 19 Sep 1947-Chicago, IL  
m 11 Jun 1995-Cong Beth El, Bethesda, MD

Benjamin Kaleko (Baruch Natan) KRAVITZ  
b 28 Jun 1994-Yekaterinburg, Russia

Daniel Kaleko (Daniel Shimon) KRAVITZ  
b 6 Nov 1995-Yekaterinburg, Russia

Srooly [Yisroel] KRAVTSOV  
b 1894  
d 1970-Kiev,Russia

sp: Tatanya KRAVTSOVA  
b 1901  
d 1973-Kiev, Russia

Clara KRAVTSOVA

sp: Izya TARNAVSKY  
d 1996-Brooklyn, NY

Raisa YESILEVSKY

sp: David YESILEVSKY

Lucy Tarnovsky DUBINSKY

sp: Boris DUBINSKY

Slavic DUBINSKY

Irene DUBINSKY

Fanya KRAVTSOVA

Loeva KRAVTSOVA

Meir KRAVTSOV  
b 1894  
d 25 Dec 1968-Russia

sp: Yenna KRAVTSOVA



## THE KRAVTSOV FAMILY

**Gregory KRAVTSOV**

**Genia Kravtsova SHEYNIS (AMER)**

**sp: Yisroel(IZLA) SHEYNIS**

**Rita DAVIDSON**

**sp: Alexander DAVIDSON**

**Yelena DAVIDSON**

**Igor DAVIDSON**

**Nellie KATZ**

**sp: Michael KATZ****Natasha KATZ**

**Stella KATZ**

**Mischa (Mikhael) KRAVTSOV (AMER)**

**sp: Olga KRAVSOVI**

**Semyon KRAVSOVI**

**Marina KRAVSOVI**

b -Russia

**sp: Israel BELOPOLSKI**

**Nicole BELOPOLSKI**

**sp: Nina KRAVTSOVA**

b -Russia

**Sarah Kravtsova (?)**

b 1907-Russia

**sp: Israel (?)**

**Joseph KRAVTSOV**

**Basya Kravtsova KAPLAN (AMER)**

**sp: Phillip KAPLAN**

**Israel KAPLAN**

**sp: Israel's wife KAPLAN**

## Israel's Daughter A KAPLAN

**Israel's Daughter B KAPLAN****Chassy DRANOV (Leshner)**

d 1973-New York

**sp: Reuben DRANOV**

**Bernard DRANOV**

**sp: Bernard's wife DRANOV**

**Son B DRANOV**

**Tsirka CHIPOV (Leshner)**

d 1925-New York

**sp:**

**Eva Chipov GUTTMAN****sp: Michael GUTTMAN**

**Bathsheba RAY (Leshner)**

d -New York

**Boruch LESHNER**

A 1910 Russian

**sp: Basya LESHNER**

d 1943-at Babi Yar



# THE KRAVTSOV FAMILY

Bertha (?)

d 1953-Russia

Boruch's Daughter (?)

Boruch's Son LESHNER

Yitzhak LESHNER

sp: Udyā LESHNER

Fanya Leshner POLISHUK

sp: Micha POLISHUK

Zvi POLISHUK

Boris(Boruch) LESHNER

sp:

Sabena (?)

Yaakov LESHNER



## C. Hebrew Name Origins

Lawrence Charles Kravitz: Aryeh (in Yiddish: Betzalel Leib) (Levite) (1)  
Betzalel: unknown origin  
Leib=>Aryeh: origin unknown

Marjorie Ruth Helman: Malka Rivka  
Rivka Malka: Grandmother, Mollie (Rivka Malka) Weiss

Alan Bruce Kravitz: Aharon Benjamin (Levi)  
Aharon: Grandfather, Harry (Aharon) Krawitz  
Benjamin: Great Grandmother, Beyle Rissin

Sandra Debby Kresch: Sarah Dvora  
Sarah: Great Grandmother (paternal), Sarah Greenbaum (Holocaust)  
Dvora: Great Great Aunt (paternal), Dvorah Zipzinger (Holocaust)

Meryl Beth Kravitz: Meira Bracha  
Meira: Great Uncle, Rabbi Meir Simcha Ostrinsky:  
Bracha: Great Uncle, Bernard (Baruch) Krawitz

Evan Shmuel David Kravitz: Yitzhak Shmuel David  
Yitzhak: Great Grandfather (maternal), Yitzhak Kresch  
Shmuel David: Great Grandfather (maternal), Shmuel David Byck

Natalie Ann Kravitz: Nechama Mindel Bracha  
Nechama: Great Grandfather, (paternal), Nathan (Nachum) Helman  
Mindel: Great Grandmother (maternal), Mindel Kresch  
Bracha: Great Grandmother (maternal) Betty (Bracha) Byck

Saul Abram Kravitz: Shaul Abram (Levi)  
Shaul Abram: Grandmother, Sarah Ester Helman

Beryl Ann Kravitz: Batya  
Batya: Grandmother (paternal), Bertha (Batya) Rothstein

Ayelet Hadas Kravitz: Ayelet Hadas  
Ayelet: Grandfather, Zvi Rothstein (Zvi=>Ayal=>Ayelet)  
Hadas: Great Grandmother, Ester (Hadas) Helman

Nadav Meir Kravitz: Nadav Meir  
Nadav: parents liked the name  
Meir: Great Uncle, Rabbi Meir Simcha Ostrinsky

Talya Sarah Kravitz  
Talya: parents liked the name  
Sarah: Great Grandmother (maternal), Sarah Pollack

Elana Miriam Kravitz



Elana: parents liked the name  
Miriam: Friend, Anthony (Aharon) Veeder

Steven Jacob Kravitz: Zvi Jacob (Levi)  
Zvi: Grandmother, Emma Krawitz ( Eshke=>Hirsch (Yiddish)=>Zvi (Hebrew))  
Jacob: Great Grandfather Jacob Helman

Esther Kaleko Kravitz: Esther  
Esther: Grandmother(maternal), Esther Chernitzky

Benjamin Kaleko Kravitz: Baruch Natan  
Baruch: Great Uncle, Bernard (Baruch) Krawitz  
Natan: Great Great Uncle, Nathan (Natan) Weiss

Daniel Kaleko Kravitz: Daniel Shimon  
Daniel: Great Aunt (maternal), Dinah Kaleko  
Shimon: Great Grandfather (maternal), Shimon Kaleko

(1) Betzalel Leib is the original name in Yiddish that appears on the ketuba. Betzalel (Shadow of God) was later dropped. Leib (from the German Loeb, or Leo, for lion) was converted to the Hebrew Aryeh. See Alfred E Kolatch, The Complete Dictionary of English and Hebrew first names, 1984. ISBN 0-8246-0925-1.

Bertha Spielman: Basha (Batya)  
Basha: Origin unknown

Simon Spielman: Shmuel  
Shmuel: origin unknown

Howard Aaron Spielman:Zvi Aharon  
Zvi: Great grandfather, Nechemia Zvi Rissin (Holocaust)  
Aharon: Grandfather, Harry (Aharon) Krawitz

Gail Enid Weinstein:Zehava Ita  
Zehava: Great Grandmother (Paternal) Golda (=>Zehava) Slaff  
Ita: Great Grandmother (Paternal), Ita Spielman

Benjamin Gabler:Benjamin Shmuel  
Benjamin: parents liked the name  
Shmuel: Grandfather(paternal), Shmuel Gabler

Rachel Chanah Weinstein  
Rachel: Grandmother (paternal), Rachel Weinstein  
Chanah: parents liked the name

Zvi Ostrin: Zvi (Cohen)  
Zvi: Paternal Grandfather, Zvi Ostrinsky



Renah Lorraine Ostrinsky: Renah Elisheva  
Renah: Grandfather, Aharon Krawitz  
Elisheva: Paternal side of family

Sarah Jessica Ostrinsky: Sarah Yissca  
Sarah Yissca: Grandmother (paternal), Sarah Yissca Ostrinsky



THE KRAVITZ FAMILY HISTORY IS IN  
THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. THE ORIGINAL  
YIDDISH LETTERS ARE AT VIVO.



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YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH  
ידי שער וויסנשאפטלעכער אינסטיטוט - יו"א

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December 18, 2003

Lawrence Kravitz  
7128 Wolfree Lane  
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Mr. Kravitz,

We most gratefully acknowledge your kind donation of the following materials to the YIVO Archives:

Eighty letters from the Rissin family of Vereschaki, Belarus, sent to relatives in America in 1928 - 1946. English translations thereof. Forty-four page family history.

Your gift is a valuable contribution to the YIVO's collections, and it is deeply appreciated. Should you wish at some future time to inquire about these materials, please refer to the following accession number: 86/03.

Sincerely yours,

Leo Greenbaum  
Accessioning Archivist

US LOC Control No 2003475301



# Date Catalog of Letters in YIVO Archive

10/31/2004

Code	From	To	Translation	Date and Comment
12.2	Eshke	Mary	ET	Undated,1910; Life in America, Will send money at Chanukah
7	Eshke	Mary	ET	April 28, 1911; Where is money?; Hard times in America
12.1	Eshke	Mary	ET	January 4, 1912; Detailed travel instructions to Mary
220	Itse	Eshke..in Red Bank	ET	1914 postcard from Hamburg..who will meet him?..on Lincoln
236p	Morris	Eshke..in NYC	ET	1914 postcard from Libau..arriving May 26 on Kursk. Actually arrived on 8 June.
				<b>Life in Verischaki</b>
Q	Sarah	Eshke	ET	Yiddish source for 239
239	Sarah	Eshke	EM	1926; no news
236	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1927; Pesha married; winter clothes, war, draft, Mama hurt
107	Pesha	Eshke	EM	1927; Her marriage;same as 240;Sarah clever, can't leave home
111	Pesha	Eshke	Yiddish	1927; Assume to be original for ,107,240.
240	Pesha	Eshke	EM	1927;About her husband..in Gorki, etc;same as 107
F	Pesha	All	ET	F is Yiddish source for 110,241
110	Pesha	All	EM	Sept 1928;Thanks for gift;same as 241
241	Pesha	Eshke	EM	1928;Thanks for wedding gift;same as 110
237	NZ	?	ET	1930: Leiser in Blacksmith Coop. NZ too old
18	Beyle	Moyshe	ET	1931; Can't be like Kulaks; Eshke \$20 missing
212b	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1931; \$20 missing
15	Beyle	Sarah Lipack	ET	1931; Trouble in Russia; Weddings of Sarah's sons.
R	Sarah	Izzy	Yiddish	R is the source for 114
114	SaraL	Izzy	EM	1932; no news
223	NZ	Eshke	ET	about 1932; refers to Leiser moved to city (Orsha) where commodities were available for dollars..otherwise dollars of little value. This is first mention of the Torgsin.
				●
		Date Keys:		● Joe born: Jan 28,1921..assume BM in Jan 1934
				....Assume collective starts Pesach 1934
				Assume..Leyser returns Pesach 1934..Blacksmith a collective
				● Leyser marries in May 1934



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10/31/2004

				..Leyser and Dvorah live with NZ&B until Fall 1934
				..Fall 1934..NZ & B sell house etc and move to Gorki...Leyser and Dvora get money to buy a room in Leningrad.
208	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1933; Package from Heaven, food;Leiser and Leah
224	NZ	Eshke	ET	1933: Food Parcels received, pages 1,2
219	NZ	Eshke	ET	pages 2,3
226	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1933; Izzy suffers from Lena; Eshke read letter to Izzy
C	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1933; Sara Leah doing harvest..they pay taxes, middle class
-9.1	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1933; Last pages of C
-9.2	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1933; Last pages of C; Pesha,Leiser working;single
119	Beyle	Eshke	EM	1933; Sara L seldom home; milking hard...Trans of C
234	Beyle	Riva/Morri	ET	1933; Document consists of 2 fragments to Riva and Morris
202	Beyle	Riva	ET	1933; Document is a fragment to Riva
234A	Beyle	Morris	ET	1933; <b>fragment</b> ;Leah/agronomist, <b>torgsin</b> ,travel to Gorki
234B	Beyle	Riva	ET	1933; 2 <b>fragments</b> ; <b>torgsin</b> , asks Rochel for money for Sheyne
8	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1933; Fall before kolkoz..Sarah single..America
18	Beyle	Eshke	ET	Fall 1933; America yes/no;collective in spring
201	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1934; Joe's BM;Does he know Yiddish? Talis and tfiln..
244	NZ	Eshke	EM	1934; Feb;showed speech at synagogue in Gorki
5	Sarah	Eshke	ET	1934; working on collective farm ( 34.25)
245	Beyle	Eshke	EM	1934;Feb: BM speech;her health;=118
118	Beyle	Eshke	EM	1934; Bar Mitzvah speech; Stomach Problems;=245
--O	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1934; Yiddish of 118
109	Beyle	Eshke	EM (Martha)	1934;The Bar Mitzvah Speech
108	NZ	Eshke	EM	1934;The Bar Mitzvah Speech;=244
244	NZ	Eshke	EM	Joe's Bar Mitzvah speech;=108
17	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1934;Pesach ,farm kolkoz started..with problems.
P	NZ&B	Eshke	ET	1934;April: LO home..on kolkoz, Joes BM, Pesha /Husb; Leah in Gorki..LO and Leah single..
205a	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1934;4pp;new teeth;clothes for girls;bad pictures
205b	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1934; 5,6 of a letter:after Joe BarM; before Leah Married; what about Izzy?
212a	Beyle	Itse	ET	1934; Why doesn't Itse, Lena, or Milton write?
115	Leiser	Eshke	EM	1934; May ;Leiser marriage;same as 247
247	Leizer	Eshke	EM	1934;Leiser married;same as 115
218	NZ&B	Eshke	ET	1934;Yiddish original for 246. (may not be living with NZ&B)
246	NZ&B	Eshke	EM	1934;Leiser & Dvora living with NZ&B; NZ likes her



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10/31/2004

16	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1934; After harvest ;
				<b>NZ &amp; B Move to Gorki</b>
231	Beyle	Eshke	ET	Jan 1935;Leiser moves NZ&B to Gorki;House,cow sold, Leiser moves to Leningrad with Dvora.
220	Beyle	Moyshe	ET	Spring 1935; On move to Gorki
206	NZ	Eshke	ET	May 1935; In apartment; Sarah Leah marries
1bottom	NZ	Eshke	ET	Gorki Address; A poem
10	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1935; House sold;money to Leiser for room; Fira born
-1front	Beyle	Eshke	ET	Top is page 5 of 10
-1back	Beyle	Eshke	ET	Top is page 6 of 10
14.1	NZ&B	Eshke	ET	1935;Fira born;NZ recalls departure
N	NZ	Eshke	ET	1935,incomplete..after Leonard, Bertha's hair; Where's Morris?
235	Beyle	Eshke	ET	1935; companion to N: Where's Morris?
13	Beyle	Morris	ET	1935; In rented home; No letter from Leybke
6.2	NZ	Eshke	ET	page 3 ; 1,2 missing..before Pesha's child
215	NZ&B	Eshke	ET	Feb.1936; No kosher meat; No Shabbos; Vilde chayas;\$ rate
14.2	NZ&B	Eshke	ET	May 1936; Sara Leah son Boris born..(29 April '36)
209	Beyle	Morris	ET	June 1936; Pesha's miscarriages
213	NZ&B	Eshke	ET	July 1936; Visitor from US; Chazen; send packages, no \$.
229	B&NZ	Eshke	ET	Sept1936; Describes booth,Beautiful Fira
211	NZ&B	Eshke	ET	Oct 1936;Visitor from US; teeth on shelf; page 3,4 missing
221			ET	May 1937: Life in the Booth..heating
207			ET	Continuation of 221
6.1	Beyle	Eshke	ET	May 1937;last letter from Beyle before her death ; May 5, 1937
214	NZ	Eshke,etal	ET	June 25, 1937; to Eshke, Izzy, Morris; <b>Beyle dies 21 May</b>
L	NZ	Eshke	ET	July 21, 1937; <b>Beyle death</b> ;saying kaddish;Izzy will pay..pages 1,2...unfinished
228	NZ	Eshke	ET	July 1937; 1,2,3 missing;After Beyle's death;plea for letters; Boris 1yr 3 mos;
				<b>Nechemia Zvi Moves in with Sara Leah</b>
19	NZ	Eshke	ET	Dec 1937;Second son for Sara Leah..23Nov'37.;Russian rhyme.
T.1	Pesha	Moishe	ET	Dec 1937; Will write;Fira pretty, Berthold named after Beyle
K	NZ	Moishe	ET	Jan 1938; Pesha plays with Boris;NZ asks for matza;can't play with kids; proud of daughters.
11	NZ	Moishe	ET	1938; Living with Sara Leah and Boris
E	NZ	Eshke	ET	1938; <b>combines 104 and 113.1</b> .Sarah serves pork..NZ don't eat
113.1	NZ	Eshke	EM	1938;Living in Sarah Leah's house, tending children; Boris birthday 29 April '36
104	NZ	Eshke	EM	March 1938; sad about illness



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10/31/2004

232	NZ	Eshke	ET	May, 1939;Relatives news;Sarah works;Free education
2.1	NZ	Moishe	ET	July '39;pages 1,2; Verischak burned down;Fira visits;
4	NZ	Moishe	ET	Pages 3,4 NZ needs money;Morris not working
T2	NZ	Eshke	ET	Sept 1939; Same as 105; Better translation; Encouragement;News
105	NZ	Eshke	EM	Sept'39; Encouragement
3a,b	NZ	Moishe	ET(L) as 36	1939-40; Boris doesn't look good
230	NZ	Eshke	ET	1939;Peshe's child born;Peshe not working.
216	NZ	Moishe	ET(L) as 36	1939 Pesha's child is born. He wants calendar pages.
210	NZ	Moishe	ET	1939 Pesha's child is born. Name is Boris. Rec'd calendar. Beyle's yahrzeit.
				<b>After The War</b>
D	Pesha	Eshke	ET	Yiddish source of 116,248
116	Pesha	Eshke	EM	1945; April; same as 248
248	Pesha	Eshke	EM	1945;Greeting;same as 116
106	Pesha	Eshka	EM	Dec. '45;The letter from Tashkent;same as 250 (also Yiddish original)
250	Pesha	Eshke	EM	1945;Pesha reports on war losses..same as 106
101	Fanny	Eshke	EM	3 notes;1945
M	Pesha	Eshke	ET	Yiddish source of 121 and 251..with corrections
121	Pesha	Eshke	EM	1946; Need names in parents memory;same as 251
251	Pesha	Eshke	EM	1946;gives ages of children; Name of Howard;same as 121
	Fanny	Eshke	ET	1958: Enclosed pictures of Fira and others
113.2	Fira	Bertha	EM	1988;From Vienna, enroute
				<b>Izzy's problems</b>
103	Izzy	Eshke	EM	March 1936;Lena's problems
243	Izzy	Eshke	EM	1936;His problems with Lena
102	Lena	Eshke	EM	1936..summer in Catskills;same as 242
242	Lena	Eshke	EM	From "the country";same as 102
120	Izzy	Martha	EM	1945; No meat; no money; check for new position.;=249
249	Izzy	Martha	EM	1945;Problems,no meat,no loan;=120
20	Izzy	Bertha	ET	1946; Pidyen Haben;Lena's problems
112	Leonard	Eshke	EM	1953; wants father's and grandfather's Hebrew names.



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10/31/2004

				<b><u>Untranslated Papers</u></b>
				<b><u>On Deck</u></b>
205	BerLeib	Fanny K.	russian	envelope from Leningrad;1949; letter missing
203	Beyle	Morris	Y	4pp
A	Eshke		zz	notes; is this her handwriting?
252				Photo of Mary and friend
238	NZ	Unk	Y	p6,7 of letter
5	Unk	Sister	z	1934, 4 page, clear
217	Unk	Unk	Y	2pp;Smeared from back side
225	Unk	Unk	Y	2pp;1969;clear
233	Unk	Unk	Y	2 sides of a scrap;russian boat ticked.
G	Unk	Unk	z	4pp; refers to talmud torah-melamed
S	y	Zvi	z	1974; related to his trip
234.1	Unk	Unk	Y	possibly from Leah